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Jewish-Muslim Veneration at Pilgrimage Places in the Holy Land

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Abstract

For millennia human communities have designated certain sites as sacred and nowhere more so than in the Holy Land. The Bible records that Canaanites worshipped in “high places,” and the prophets railed against the Israelites for continuing the practice. Jesus castigated the Pharisees for adorning the tombs of the prophets. When Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, those who remained on the land did not abandon their devotion to the holy sites. When the Muslims arrived they continued the practice of visiting the tombs of those figures mentioned in both the Bible and the Quran. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern period Muslims and Jews wrote about their visits to these jointly-venerated tombs. Jews made illustrated scrolls, wall hangings, and other works of art depicting these sites, representing the shrines with prominent Islamic crescents on top, an indication that Jewish viewers felt no discomfort at the use of this iconography. The Jewish valorization of the Islamic crescent atop shrines common to Jews and Muslims reflects a relationship very different from that existing between the two cultures today.

Keywords

pilgrimage, tombs, shrines, Holy Land, Jewish arts and crafts

For millennia human communities worldwide have designated springs, wells, trees, groves, mountains, and caves as sacred, and perhaps nowhere more so than in the Holy Land. At these sites people would erect their shrines and placate their gods or goddesses. As the Hebrew Bible so amply records, those living in the land of Canaan well before the Hebrews filtered in, worshipped in “high places” (Numbers 33:52). And when the Israelites came into the land, the practices did not stop. The prophet Ezekiel warned of the Lord’s displeasure: “So said the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivulets and to the valleys: Behold I bring upon you the sword, and I shall destroy your high places. And your altars will

become desolate, and your sun gods will be broken, and I shall cast your slain ones before your idols” (Ezekiel 6:3–4). The warnings continue: The Lord’s fury will be taken out against the altars, the mountaintops, and the leafy trees, all the places where the people “offered up a satisfying savor to all their idols” (Ezekiel 6:13). The practice of offering “satisfying savors” to the gods was also decried in Leviticus 26:30, where the Lord warns against the people’s burning incense, “pleasant fragrance,” at their “holy places.”¹ So, as often occurs in the study of religious practices, one learns about what customs were practiced by looking at what was prohibited. The scriptures would not have been railing against these activities unless they were widely practiced.

Even when monotheism took firm hold, the sites were not abandoned. Instead patriarchs, saints, sheihks, and sages took the place of the pagan deities or local spirits. The sites—and the figures associated with them—often became known for a “specialty,” usually having to do with healing, economic prosperity, looking for a wife or husband, human fertility, exorcising the evil eye, or purifying the soul. No matter what new conqueror appeared, the people on the land would not abandon their devotion to the holy sites, though the names of the figures honored could change. This essay analyzes the textual and art-historical evidence relating to some of these shrines, in particular those where both Muslims and Jews prayed. Jewish art from the sixteenth through the twentieth century corroborates what Jewish and Muslim texts from the last eleven hundred years demonstrate: Jews and Muslims worshipped at many of the same holy sites, whether they were built and cared for by inhabitants of a nearby Muslim village, in a town under Muslim suzerainty, or in Tiberias, Safed, and Meron where most Jews lived during the late Middle Ages and the early modern period—lived and worshipped among a much larger Arab population. This joint veneration continued until the mid-twentieth century, when at many of the sites a process of eradication or “rededication” was undertaken by the new State of Israel.

Any discussion of “holy sites” should be put into the context of two satirical stories. One, a folkloric tale, is about a Muslim saint’s tomb tended to by old Sheikh Abdullah. When he was not serving as guardian, the sheikh rode from village to village on a donkey, accompanied by a boy, Ali. The Sheikh would prescribe for the sick and make amulets to protect the

¹ For examples of altars in “high places” see also 1 Kings, 12:31 and 13:32; 2 Kings 17:29, 21:3, 23:5–19, etc.

wearers from the evil eye. When Ali grew up, the Sheikh told him to take the donkey and make a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, so that like his teacher, the young man would be able to obtain a post as the guardian of a shrine. Ali set out with the old donkey, but soon found himself on a barren plain with a hot wind blowing. Suddenly the donkey stopped and died. Ali did not want to leave the donkey to the vultures, so he dug a grave and started to mourn him. All at once, a nobleman on horseback galloped up. He assumed Ali was a holy *derwish* mourning at a newly-made grave. “Death has overtaken his holy companion,” the horseman thought, and he asked the young man the name of the departed. “Eyr” Ali replied, using a poetical word for “ass.” “His memory shall live on,” promised the nobleman, and set about building a splendid shrine. The shrine soon grew famous, and the old Sheikh heard of its renown. He made a pilgrimage to the shrine of the holy ‘Eyr, and was astonished to find that the guardian was his pupil Ali. The Sheikh, overjoyed to see his pupil, asked Ali what holy figure was buried in that place. The young man told him the truth, that it was the old ass, and then said, “Tell me, what saint lies buried at your shrine at home?” The old man whispered, “Well, if you must know, he is the father of your donkey” (retold by Hanauer 173–75).

A Jewish version of this tale was set down in 1938 in a story by Haim Hazzaz (retold and translated by Benvenisti 271–72). Rebbe Meshl Yeshl, a Jewish peddler, rides his donkey from village to village, all the while reflecting on Torah. One day the donkey falls into an abyss and dies, and Rebbe Meshl Yeshl buries him under a pile of stones. Some time later a Hassidic holy man is roaming the hills with his disciples, discussing the mysteries of Kabbala, and comes upon the pile of stones. “Here is hidden and concealed the body of Rabbi Himanuna,” the Hassidic holy man declared. News of the discovery spread, a shrine was erected at the site, and the day of the holy grave’s discovery became one of celebration when many sick were cured and the blind became sighted. But the Arabs envied the Jews, drove them out, and took control of the grave. Many sick were made well, and the deaf were cured. Here this version of the Jewish folk tale takes a vicious turn, and the Arabs kill the Rebbe for questioning who was in the tomb. (This recording of the tale was set down as the internecine conflicts were beginning in Palestine in 1938.) An earlier version may have had a more comedic outcome, as the Arab tale did. Though the ending reflects the growing hostility of the time, the underlying view of the tombs is the same. Ironically enough, in 1984, fifty years after Haim Hazzaz’s retelling of the tale, the “burial place” of this very “holy man,” Rabbi Himanuna,

was “discovered” near a cave in Meron. As Hazzaz wrote, “No one checks under the gravestone . . .”

There are serious strains in both Judaism and in Islam that have rejected the cult of gravesites. Pilgrimages to such places could be regarded as superstitious, a violation of the commandments of Moses or Muhammad. Over the centuries, Jews who have maligned the custom of veneration at graves call attention to the final verses of Deuteronomy, which recount God’s burial of Moses: “And He buried him in the valley, in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Pe’or. And no person knows the place of his burial, unto this day” (34:6). The Jewish sages affirmed that the children of Israel should not come to Moses’s tomb, nor construct a Temple there, nor bring sacrifices and incense, for those practices would have been regarded as idolatry or necromancy (Mishnah, *Abodah Zarah* 3:5–10). However, these prohibitions against pilgrimages to gravesites were obviously ignored by many throughout the ages. In the tenth century a Karaite scholar, Sahl b. Masliah, condemns the practice of visiting gravesites in the strongest way:

And how should I let these goings-on pass in silence when several of the practices of idolatry are to be found among sons of Israel? They sit at the tombs, they sleep in the clefts of the rocks and they supplicate the dead saying: Rabbi Yose the Galilean, pray, heal me, or give me a belly [make me pregnant], and they light candles on the tombs of the *sadiqim* [sages] and burn before them incense, and they bind clumps [string?] on the palm tree of the *sadiq* against various diseases, and they celebrate on the tombs of the dead *sadiqim* and make there their vows, and they appeal to them and ask them to give them what they desire. (qtd. in Praver 172)

Jewish imagery illustrating the holy places sacred to Jews depicts sites that were sacred to Muslims as well, and often those jointly venerated pilgrimage sites were represented in Jewish art with Muslim religious symbols, such as crescents, a depiction that apparently neither Jewish artists nor Jewish patrons objected to.² The local people who lived in Palestine and cared for the holy sites did not write accounts of the tombs they guarded or of the rituals they observed. It is the literate visitors, often coming from afar, who provide our information. The earliest surviving pilgrimage

²) Some illustrated Muslim pilgrimage texts, with brief drawings from as early as the twelfth century, are discussed in Milstein 62–69. See also Baer 384–92.

accounts from the Holy Land are from the pens of Christians. Travelogues written by Muslims survive from the tenth century, and Jewish accounts from around the mid-twelfth century. We know, however, that the Jewish practice of going to monuments built over the tombs of prophets and adorning the sepulchers of the “holy” was common during the Second Temple period, before the exile of 70 CE. In Matthew 23:29 Jesus says “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, that build the sepulchers of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the just.” And in Luke 11:47–8, Jesus cries out: “Woe to you who build the monuments of the prophets: and your fathers killed them . . . and you build their sepulchers.” Jesus’ censuring of visits to monuments or “tombs” dedicated to the prophets was a reflection of contemporary rabbinical ideas. Two of the sites often included in the pilgrimage illustrations retain Hellenistic architectural features, thereby revealing their origins during the Second Temple period. One has been associated with the prophet Zechariah and another with David’s son Absalom (figs. 1 and 2). Monuments like these might very well be the ones that the Gospel writers were referencing. However, the “origins” of many of the other sites and the figures connected with them are part of the mytho-religious past.

We do not know when the tradition of compiling un-illustrated accounts or “lists” of these holy sites began. Among Christians we have the fourth-century travel writings of an anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux, France. He visits many sites mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as well as the Gospels. Among Muslims, one of the earliest is surely Al-Muqaddasi (c. 945–1000), who provides a good deal of valuable information about the places he visits. Starting in the twelfth century, Jewish travelers from the Arab lands write about numerous sacred tombs in their *ziyara*, “visits, or travelogues” in Arabic (Reiner 9–10). These Jews, writing and speaking Arabic, were familiar with the local Arab residents’ mentality, since they spoke the same language (Reiner 12). Un-illustrated “*ziyara*” lists of holy places, drawn up by Arabic-speaking Jews, are known from the thirteenth century; texts of western Jewish travelers have come down to us from the first half of the twelfth century (Reiner 12). By the fourteenth century the lists of sites to be visited were accompanied by brief diagrams (Reiner, 14–15; his figure 10). But, as we will see below, extensively decorated and amply-colored Jewish illustrations of pilgrimage sites survive only from around the middle of the sixteenth century. Muslim illustrated itineraries, which are not the subject of this essay, have survived from around the same time (Milstein 62–63; Baer 389–92).



Figure 1. Ermete Pierotti. "Tomb" of Zechariah. Lithograph. Ermete Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1864).

It is a normal human need to hope that a holy figure or sage can help one in times of trouble. The material gathered in this essay demonstrates how Muslims and Jews shared that hope, and indeed how, until the middle of the twentieth century, Jews and Muslims shared a reverence for so many of the same Biblical and Quranic figures, and must have felt comfortable venerating those figures at the same holy sites. Since for the most part the Muslims living on the land were in charge of the sites, we will see that many Jewish travelers comment on how the Arabs guarding the holy places



Figure 2. Ermete Pierotti. "Tomb" of Absalom. Lithograph. Ermete Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1864).

treated the Jewish pilgrims with respect, allowing them to pray there without harassment.

Though each of the illustrated Jewish “itineraries” is somewhat different, their emblematic images at times suggest the architectural form of the tomb or monument associated with the hero or sage venerated inside. The early examples of these illustrated itineraries have been given the name *Yihus ha-Avot* (Genealogy of the Patriarchs). In the more elaborate illustrated itineraries one can count upwards of seventy separate sites/tombs listed (see the Benayahu manuscript, fig. 3). Our study will deal mainly with only five or six of the sites: Hebron/Masjid Ibrahim (also known among Jews as the Cave of Machpelah, and Kiriyat Arba, and among Muslims as Habra and Habrun); the Burial place of Rachel (Rahil among the Arabs); the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David (among Arabs, Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud. It is also called The Citadel, David’s Citadel, and the tower of David. Christians placed the church of the Last Supper there and call that part of the complex the Coenaculum); the tomb of Samuel at Rama (also called Ramah; Muslims call the site Nabi Samwil); and the tombs or monuments dedicated to a few of the rabbis and sages who lived at some time between the Hellenistic period and the late Middle Ages.

The first surviving illustrated Jewish scrolls and manuscripts were created during the first half of the sixteenth century, at a time when the Ottomans had brought a certain economic prosperity to Palestine. When the Ottomans took Jerusalem in 1517 they began investing in the land and taking a general interest in it (Peters 483). The Jewish visitors who arrived took note of this phenomenon. Some of the immigrants located themselves in Safed, a town that began to enjoy a new degree of wealth partially due to the skills they brought in. David de Rossi, a visitor from Italy in the sixteenth century, says that Jews fared better in Palestine under the Ottomans than they did in Italy:

Here we are not in exile as in our country. Here... those appointed over the customs and the king’s tolls are Jews, and there is no wrongdoing anywhere in the kingdom. There are no special Jewish taxes here, albeit this year, because of the war with the Sophy [i.e. the Sufi, the Safavid Shah of Iran], the Jews were required to lend some money to the princes. Some of the princes gave them pledges in return, and some gave them the sources of the income of the town; and the Jews collect them. But the scholars have no payment to make, saving the poll-tax. (qtd. in Peters 484)

It is in this climate that the some of our earliest illustrated itineraries were made, a climate in which Palestine in general, but Jerusalem and the Galilee in particular, saw an increase in prosperity.



Figure 3. *Benayahu Manuscript*. “Yihus ha-Avot.” Scribe: Moshe son of Aaron Trigero. Jerusalem, c. 1549–50. Re-painted and an illustration added by Abraham son of Mazliah, Senigallia, Italy. 1659. Tempera and ink on parchment. 89 × 62. Courtesy of the Professor Meir Benayahu Collection.



Figure 4. Detail of Hebron, from *Benayahu Manuscript*. Courtesy of the Professor Meir Benayahu Collection.



Figure 5. Detail of Messiah approaching Jerusalem, from *Benayahu Manuscript*. Illustration added by Abraham son of Mazliah, Senigallia, Italy. 1659. Courtesy of the Professor Meir Benayahu Collection.



Figure 8. Detail of *Benayahu Manuscript*. Rachel's Tomb (top) and Temple Mount (bottom). Courtesy of the Professor Meir Benayahu Collection.

Our study of the visual material reflecting the jointly venerated gravesites begins with the Benayahu manuscript. Its origin (Jerusalem) and its date (1549–50), as well as its scribe, Moshe son of Aaron Trigoero, are known (Reiner 11) (fig. 3). This large parchment sheet is an early example of an illustrated “itinerary” designating a route that pilgrims should follow. This sheet was probably destined to be hung on the wall, though others of its kind were made to be sent with emissaries to the West as part of fundraising activity (Sarfati, “Illustrations” 21). Its composition in four rows reveals that its ultimate model was a scroll, which was a common format for such pilgrimage lists (For examples of such scrolls see figures 9 and 10). The “itinerary” starts with the sites at the top right-hand column and continues down to the lower border, then up to the second row, etc. The “scroll” model that this was based on must have begun with the illustration of Hebron, an ordering that probably indicates that the pilgrim was to begin his journey not from Acre, which was the usual point of debarkation, but rather from Egypt. At the top right, we see a “structure” composed of four similar upright rectangles on the right and one arched space to the left of them (fig. 4, detail). Each of these spaces has a hanging lamp in the center and inscriptions above and below. Beginning from the right, the inscriptions read: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah.³ The vaulted, arched space on the far left of this column, the space with the biggest hanging lamp is labeled “Entrance to the Garden of Eden.” The hanging lamps were part of the ritual appointments of these shrines, and are often mentioned by the pilgrims, as is the oil used to keep them burning. Hanging lamps in this context may well recall the Muslim practice reflected in Islamic art where such lamps are frequently represented in funerary or commemorative contexts (Khoury 11–28).

The “roof” of these structures is surmounted by a saw-tooth pattern, and, as in the rest of the drawings, the whole is decorated with the colors red, gold, and black. However, these colors were added over a hundred years later, in a repainting executed in Senigallia, Italy. This supposition is supported by the fact that at the bottom of the far left-hand corner of the sheet is a drawing in a much later style (fig. 5, Benayahu detail). It was added in 1659 by one Abraham Mazliah working in Senigallia, Italy. It has precisely the same coloring as the rest of the shrines on the sheet; thus the colors must have been put on by Mazliah at that time. Mazliah presents us

³ I would like to thank Gil Chalamish and Rivka Cohen for their help with reading the Hebrew inscriptions.

with a well-known image found represented on an Italian printer's mark in 1545 (fig. 6), and then in the Venice Hagaddah of 1609, reproduced many times (fig. 7). It is the Messianic Temple of the End of Days, and in the Haggadah, as in the 1659 addition to the Benayahu sheet, it is represented within the walls of Jerusalem. In all these examples, the Temple is drawn as multi-sided. It has the same dome, drum with windows, ambulatory, decorative arches and platform as the Dome of the Rock.⁴ The image was placed on the final page of Hagaddahs for centuries. This Temple of the End of Days is surrounded by the circular walled Jerusalem with gates at the top and bottom as well as towers at the corners. In both the Haggadah and in the Mazliah drawing at the lower left, the Messiah rides up on a donkey; he is following Elijah the prophet who is blowing a shofar. As they come near the central portal, people move toward the city. They represent the nations approaching Jerusalem at the End of Days. In the Mazliah drawing, as an indication that time has stopped, the sun and the moon both appear personified in the sky, a motif going back to the ancient Roman period. That the Jewish messianic Temple of the End of Days is modeled on the Dome of the Rock presented no problem to Mazliah or to the patrons who hung this sheet on their wall. Indeed a larger though more abstract rendering of the Dome of the Rock representing the Temple (along with the School of Solomon represented in the guise of the Al-Aqsa Mosque) is found on this sheet, for the Temple Mount was an all-important pilgrimage site (fig. 8, bottom). The view of the Temple Mount is from the east. The Dome of the Rock representing the Temple of Solomon is to the right near the boarder, and the School of Solomon is to the left in the place where the Al-Aqsa mosque now stands.⁵ The image of the Dome of the Rock standing for the Temple is found in Jewish art going back to at least the late 1400s. It was so common at this time that Mazliah did not hesitate to use this octagonal domed image to stand for the Temple in his depiction of the Messianic Temple of the End of Days. Nor did the artist of the Benayahu sheet, a hundred years earlier, hesitate to use the Dome of the Rock to represent the Temple. And inside the Temple, the Benayahu artist drew, under the far right arch beneath the checker-board dome, the Foundation Stone on which, according to the Mishnah, the Ark of the Covenant had rested before it was taken away when the Jews were exiled to Babylonia in 587 BCE.

⁴ See Berger, *The Crescent on the Temple*, forthcoming.

⁵ For a complete discussion of this theme see Berger, *Crescent*.

As a traveler continued his visit in Hebron, he would come upon the tomb of David's father Jesse, below the patriarchs' tombs, to the right near the border (fig. 4). This tomb is within a vaulted, domed shrine with a finial on top. Below that are more Abrahamic sites: The pilgrim who visited Hebron over the centuries was shown not only the tombs, but also a "house" of Abraham and a tree (called the oak of Mamre) or a grove thought to be the place where Abraham greeted the three angels (Genesis 18:1–14). The earliest mention of the Abrahamic site at Hebron in a pilgrimage text is by the anonymous Christian Pilgrim of Bordeaux in 333 CE. He visited Mamre (later called Ramet el-Khalil by the Arabs), and he wrote that Abraham had dwelt there and had dug a well under a terebinth tree (8b). The Bordeaux Pilgrim says that at that tree, Abraham "spoke with angels, and ate food with them," as the Genesis story recounts. The anonymous pilgrim concluded with the comment that "Constantine had built a wondrously beautiful basilica there." As we have noted, people often regarded "sacred" trees and groves with a special awe, and Constantine's church, like so many others, consecrated what must have been a site that had been holy for centuries. To the left of Abraham's dwelling is the stone that pilgrims were told was the place where Abraham circumcised himself (fig. 4, bottom left). It is depicted as resting on twin points placed upright. It vaguely resembles a structure with a door and two flanking towers, a kind of monumental façade. Later in Jewish art, this abbreviated abstract image gets transformed into the iconic image of the ashlar-masonry sanctuary built over the caves at Hebron.

As we saw with the Pilgrim of Bordeaux's 333 CE text, since at least the early fourth century Hebron had been a pilgrimage site for Christians. Jews were probably living there under Byzantine Christian rule before the Muslims arrived, for a story is recorded in a Christian manuscript from the fifteenth century that references the period just before the Muslim conquest. The manuscript mentioned the "Jews who lived in the area" and reports that they were prevented by the Christians/Byzantines from building a synagogue in front of the entrance to the city. With the Muslim conquest in 638, however, Jews were permitted to build the synagogue and were also given a letter of security to allow them to continue living there (Gil 58).

Early Muslim travelers to the site left the most ample records of Hebron, long before any Jewish pilgrims wrote about their visits. One of the first Muslims to leave an account was the merchant, Istakhri, who wrote around

951 CE. About thirty-five years later, another merchant, Ibn Haukal enlarged upon Istakhri's word and put his own name to it:

The Masjid Ibrahim [Mosque of Abraham] lies to the south of Bethlehem. In the Mosque, where Friday prayer is said, are the tombs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They lie in a row, and beside each of these is placed the tomb of his wife. This city lies in a valley between hills. It has many trees round it. The trees here—as also in other hilly parts of Filastin (Palestine)—are chiefly olive and fig-trees... (qtd. in Le Strange 309)

Around the same time, in 985, Mukaddasi, a geographer born in Jerusalem, made these observations when he visited Hebron, which he called, “the village of Abraham, the Friend of God” (Le Strange 309). He mentions the mosque over the tomb of Abraham with its dome built of stone during Islamic times. He reports that

the garden round has become the mosque court, and built in it are the rest-houses for the pilgrims... All the country round Hebron... is filled with villages and vineyards, and grounds bearing grapes and apples; it is even as though it were all but a single orchard of vines and fruit trees... Its equal for beauty does not exist elsewhere, nor can any fruits be finer. (qtd. in Le Strange 309)

He then describes the welcome that pilgrims of all religions can expect to receive:

In the Sanctuary at Hebron is a public guest-house, with a kitchener, a baker, and servants appointed thereto. These present a dish of lentils and olive-oil to every poor pilgrim who arrives, and it is even set before the rich if perchance they desire to partake of it. Most men erroneously imagine that this dole is of the original Guest House of Abraham, but in truth the funds come from the bequest of a certain [Companion of the Prophet Muhamed] Tamim ad Dari, and others... At the present day, in all Islam, I know of no charity or almsgiving that is better regulated than is this one; for those who travel and are hungry may eat here of good food, and thus is the custom of Abraham continued, for he, during his lifetime, rejoiced in the giving of hospitality, and, after his

death, Allah,—may He be exalted!—has thus allowed the custom to be perpetuated; and I myself, Mukaddasi, in my travels, have thus been a partaker, so to speak, of the hospitality of the Friend of God [Abraham]. (qtd. in Le Strange 309)

Though Mukaddasi's is the most eloquent, other early Muslims visitors also give glowing descriptions of Hebron. Nasir-i Khusraw departed from what is modern Tajikistan in the mid-eleventh century and made his way into Syria, Palestine, and beyond. He stopped in Hebron in 1047. "The village has a spring that flows from rock," and these waters provide for the villagers and the pilgrims (Nasir-i Khusraw 44). He also speaks of the Hebron mosque: Two tombs are placed so that the heads face toward Mecca. One is that of Isaac, the other his wife. The shrine floor and walls are decorated with costly rugs, one of which had been sent by an Amir. "I never saw its equal anywhere" (Nasir-i Khusraw 45). A different building "contains the tomb of Abraham, Friend of God. Inside there is another structure that you cannot walk all the way around, but it has four small windows through which visitors can look and see the tomb as they walk about. The whole structure is covered with brocade hangings from floor to ceiling... Many lamps and silver lamp holders are suspended therein." The tombs of Sarah, Jacob, and his wife are nearby. Nasir-i Khusraw also makes a point of highlighting the hospitality rendered at the site. When he was there visitors were "given a daily ration of one loaf of bread, a bowl of lentils cooked with olive oil, and raisins, a custom that has been maintained from the time of Abraham himself down to the present" (Nasir-i Khusraw 46).

In 1099 CE the crusaders captured Hebron, and in 1120 a Christian sanctuary was established within the complex (Prawer 177). Jews from the West begin travelling there, and in a couple of decades they leave travelogues of their journeys (Oettinger 41). One of the first surviving accounts of Hebron is from Jacob, son of Nathaniel ha Cohen who visited between 1153–1187, when the site was under Christian control. Jacob tells us that when he entered Hebron, he went "in the guise of a Gentile [Christian], into the cave which is the cave of Machpelah. The monks have built a structure upon it and falsely deceived the world. They have erected there a Church for their country folk [the crusaders]" (Adler 98). This traveler connects Hebron with Joseph the Righteous [son of Jacob], who, he said, had built the first building there. Other Jews as well as some Muslim writers had also been told that the tomb of Joseph, son of Jacob was in Hebron.

The Benayahu parchment at hand, however, like later itineraries, places Joseph's tomb at Sechem/Nablus as do most Muslim and Jewish pilgrims. Jacob ha Cohen goes on to refer to Adam's "place," a site that is on the Benayahu sheet (fig. 4, top, rectangle farthest to the right). "There is the place out of which Adam, the first man, was created" (Adler 98). Jacob is not fooled by the Christian contention that the six graves that are shown to him by the Christians are those of the patriarchs and matriarchs. He tells us what other Jewish visitors of the crusader time have written: "It is a falsehood." He realized that the crusaders had created new grave at the site. Jacob ha Cohen states that a great wall shields the real graves of Machpelah, and one cannot break into it "for once the monks made a small window therein and a strong wind came and killed them all" (Adler 98). Thus coming at the time of the crusaders, Jacob could not see what he considered to be the actual tomb of the patriarchs and matriarchs.

Between 1175 and 1187 Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbon visited Hebron, still under crusader control. His account was compiled by Judah the Pious bar Samuel from notes that Petachia had written. In Hebron, the biographer tells us, the Rabbi incorrectly thought that he "saw over the cave a large palace [the Herodian structure] which Abraham, our father, built" (Adler 89). "He [Petachia] gave to the keeper of the keys of the cave a gold piece to take him to the graves of the fathers; and the keeper opened the door, and behold there was over the entrance an image, and inside three cells." Since the site was in the hands of Christians, they must have put icons over the door, something the Muslims and Jews would have abhorred. The Rabbi gave the keeper a piece of gold to "take him inside the cave. The keeper then opened the (inner) door, saying, 'I never permitted a Gentile [non Christian] before to enter this doorway.'" After descending some steps, they "came to a very spacious cave." The graves were in the hollow of the rock, and over the entrance were iron bars. Petachia could not enter, but "he understood that the fathers were there and he prayed" (Adler 89–90).

Benjamin of Tudela made a visit to Hebron at around the same time as did Petachia. He tells us that he saw a church there "called St. Abraham, which during the time of the Mohammedans was a synagogue." He observed:

The Gentiles have erected six sepulchers in this place... the pilgrims are told that they are the sepulchers of the fathers, and money is extorted from them. But if any Jew come, who gives an additional fee

to the keeper of the cave, an iron door is opened, which dates from the times of our forefathers who rest in peace, and with a burning candle in his hands the visitor descends... and at last reaches a third [cave], which contains six sepulchers, those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah... (Benjamin of Tudela 395)

In other words, he saw what Petachia saw, and each of them had the foresight to offer the Christian guard a monetary recompense. “On the confines of the field of Machpelah stands the house of our father Abraham who rests in peace; before which house there is a spring, and, out of respect to Abraham, nobody is allowed to construct any building on that site” (Benjamin of Tudela 395). So Benjamin of Tudela saw, in the twelfth century, not only the tombs, but also a House of Abraham, perhaps like the one pictured in the sixteenth-century Benayahu sheet. He was told that the site of the church marking the site, St. Abraham, had, under Muslim rule, been a synagogue. He also mentions that there is a spring right by Abraham’s house. The spring provides us with the clue that the site of this “house of Abraham” had probably been considered sacred for centuries simply because of the presence of the spring.

The twelfth century also saw Muslims travelers visiting Hebron and leaving accounts of their voyages. For instance, the Muslim geographer Idrisi (writing in 1154) as well as ‘Ali of Herat (writing c. 1173) both went to Hebron during that time of crusader occupation (Le Strange 315–18). When they visited, they reported seeing above the tombs actual bodies clothed in garments or shrouds. This story of uncorrupted patriarchal bodies was copied into other Islamic texts as well (Le Strange 322). The tale perhaps reveals that at some point during crusader times, the knights opened the cave and the sepulchers. This notion, that the bodies were somehow intact, is in accord with western Frankish descriptions of tomb openings revealing uncorrupted saints’ bodies and should be regarded as part of that magico-religious tradition. Apart from the tales of tomb openings, the Muslim authors report much the same things about the sepulchers at Hebron as did the earlier Muslim and the Jewish authors.

In 1210, Samuel son of Samson, from Provence, France went to Hebron. First he reached “the spot where Abraham was circumcised. The Ishmaelites hold it in the highest honour. It is a rock in the form of a tomb” (Adler 104). This comment is intriguing. Though it does not provide a clear image of the circumcision “tomb,” it hints that the circumcision rock was shown to pilgrims as a specific monument. As we saw on the Benayahu parch-

ment, the rock in the illustrations came to take on the configuration of an upright structure with a triangle in it that could be seen as a “door” (fig. 4). Then, still slightly outside of Hebron, he visited the oak: He “saw there the well of Abraham, where his tent stood, and the tree under which he gave food to the three angels” (Adler 104–5). Once again, water is mentioned, this time in the form of a “well” and the “sacred” tree is noted. Just such a tree is pictured to the left of the circumcision stone/building in the Jerusalem parchment (fig. 4). As with many of these sites, the waters of a well became holy by its association with a holy figure. With the help of local Jews, Samuel was able to get the gatekeeper to let him enter the “narrow stairway” where he saw “the site of the sacred place.” He observed three monuments: “We prostrated ourselves and prayed for mercy” (Adler 105). The fact that Samuel prostrated himself shows that at this time Jews must have regarded the shrine as being at least as holy as the space of a synagogue, where, on the Day of Atonement and on the Jewish New Year, medieval Jews were likewise accustomed to prostrating themselves. Another pilgrim, Rabbi Jacob, came to Hebron a few decades later. He makes the same report about the oaks of Mamre and the circumcision stone and adds that “people take dust from the stone to heal circumcision” (Adler 120), a typical magico-religious ritual. Jewish access to the sacred tombs of Hebron fluctuated. Early fourteen-century reports indicate that for at least one pilgrim in the 1330s the cave of Machpelah was not accessible (Adler 135).

Down through the following centuries, Muslim travelers continue to visit this sacred site and provide similar accounts. For instance, in the fourteenth century, Ishak al Khalili (1351) and Hafiz Ibn 'Asakir also speak of Abraham's body on the bier, as 'Ali of Herat had mentioned (Le Strange 323). The Muslim traveler Ibn Batutah went to Hebron in 1355: “The (Haram) Mosque at Hebron is built of hewn stone [the Herodian walls are] ... said to have been built by Solomon, aided by the Jinns. Within is the holy cave, where are the tombs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; opposite lie the tombs of their wives” (Le Strange 319). Ibn Batutah elaborates on the same experience that others, Jews and Muslims, have told about before him, i.e. going down the narrow passage into a chamber paved with marble where the cenotaphs of the three tombs are found. He then gives “proofs” in the form of quotations from the Hadith [Traditions of the Prophet] that these are in fact the real tombs. He is one of the Muslims who repeat a tradition, carried on as well by some Jewish authors, that the body of Joseph, son of Jacob, is entombed in Hebron, rather than Shechem/Nablus.

These reports of visits to Hebron by Jews and Muslims continue right down to the late fifteenth-early sixteenth century, the period when the archetype of the Benayahu sheet was probably created (Sarfati, “Illustrations” 23). Two Rabbis from Italy make trips to the holy land in the late fifteenth century, Rabbi Meshullam ben R. Menahem of Volterra (1481), and Rabbi Obadiah Jaré da Bertinoro (1487–90). Rabbi Menahem finds Hebron fat and rich under Muslim suzerainty. He says that the cave of Machpelah

is in a field in the midst of Hebron, and the Moslems have built a mosque upon it, as is their custom, and they have made a wall over the cave and in it is a small window where the Jews pray and throw into it money and spices... The Moslems honour the place very much and give thirteen thousand loaves every day to the poor in honour of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and especially in honour of Abraham; and they put the bread in mustard and tender veal, such as Abraham gave to the angels, and in honour of Isaac they give venison and delicacies such as he loved, and in honour of Jacob bread and a mess of pottage such as he gave to Esau... (Adler 185)

Meshullam recounts that, at the time of his visit, there were about twenty Jewish households in Hebron. Though the Jewish men cannot go into the mosque, they can apparently pray at a small open window through which they throw money and spices. Veiled Jewish women do enter (presumably disguised as Muslims) and they describe the silver candlesticks and silk embroidered cloths adorning the tombs. The women had also learned that Muslim donations of lands and goods in honor of the dead provided a steady revenue for the upkeep of the mosque. This practice is called the *waqf* and involves the giving over of some property, usually real estate, for the perpetual benefit of a pious cause.

Rabbi Obadiah wrote two letters from the holy land that include descriptions of his visit to Hebron between 1487 and 1490. Unlike Rabbi Menahem, Obadiah was allowed the same access as the Muslims to the sacred place:

I was in the Cave of Machpelah, over which the mosque has been built. And the Arabs hold the place in high honour. All the kings of the Arabs come here to repeat their prayers, but neither a Jew nor an Arab

may enter the Cave itself, where the real graves of the Patriarchs are; the Arabs remain above, and let down burning torches into it through a window, for they keep a light always burning there. All who come to pray leave money, which they throw into the cave through the window. (Adler 233)

He goes on to repeat that food is given out to the poor. He also mentions the “large cave said to be the grave of Jesse” (Adler 233). On the Benayahu sheet, that “cave” is actually shown as a domed building, which was probably constructed over the “cave” (fig. 4). Rabbi Obadiah indicated that two of the other natural features near the site are likewise purported to be holy: the well of Isaac and the fresh-water spring of Sarah. That may be the “cleft” in the nearby hill that is said to be where Sarah bathed, probably like one of the crevices denounced by Sahl b. Masliah, who is quoted above. No doubt these water sources were what made the first settlements in the area possible, and they remained sacred through the centuries.

The Muslim Arab historian Mujir al-Din al-Ulaymi visited Hebron in the late fifteenth century, probably around the time the scroll model for this sheet was made. Elaborating on the tradition of the *waqf*, he records that Tamim al-Dari and his brothers had been given Hebron and other territories by Muhammad in around 630 CE. As with nearly all the other pilgrims, he describes the food and how the meal is “one of the most marvelous things in the world” (Mujir 20, translation from the French, mine). He mentions that the huge endowment enables a large number of loaves to be given out. “As for the eagerness shown in the preparation of the meal by the huge number of people engaged in its preparation . . . that again is a miracle and one rarely sees the equivalent” (Mujir 21).

Below the Hebron sites on the Benayahu sheet are the tombs of Benjamin, Isaiah, and possibly Gad, though the final inscription is difficult to read. And beneath those is the important monument associated with Rachel, mother of Joseph, who died giving birth to Benjamin (fig. 8, at the top). She is evoked in Jeremiah (31:14) where she is described as weeping for her children. Rachel’s dome is quite large and the stones making up its courses are graphically articulated, as are those on the altar/sepulcher beneath the hanging lamp. As mentioned before, the colors were added in the mid-seventeenth century, when the sheet made its way to Italy (Sarfati, “Illustrations” 22). Rachel’s tomb will continue to be a stopping point for pilgrims and is represented on all of the illustrated manuscripts and sheets in this study.

One of the first texts to mention Rachel's tomb is by the anonymous Christian pilgrim coming from Bordeaux, France. As he went from Jerusalem to Bethlehem he saw on the side of the road "a tomb in which lies Rachel, the wife of Jacob" (8b). He would have known the figure of Rachel not only from the references in the Hebrew Bible; she is also evoked in Matthew 2:13 in connection to the Massacre of the Innocents, where once again she is lamenting, "weeping for her children." Eight hundred years after the Bordeaux pilgrim's visit, the same site is recognized by the Muslim traveler Idrisi. In 1154 he writes: "Half-way down the road [to Bethlehem from Jerusalem] is the tomb of Rachel, the mother of Joseph and of Benjamin, the two sons of Jacob—peace upon them all! The tomb is covered by twelve stones, and above it is a dome vaulted with stones" (Le Strange 299). 'Ali of Herat makes a similar observation in around 1173. When the various texts describing Rachel's tomb speak of twelve stones, they are meant to represent the twelve tribes. When only eleven are mentioned, the writers say that each represents one of the tribes, except for Benjamin, at whose birth Rachel died.

Jewish travelers also stop there: Benjamin of Tudela (Benjamin of Tudela 394–95), Petachia, Jacob ha Cohen, and Samuel ben Samson. Isaac Chelo (1334) is one of the writers who provides a description of how the site looked in his day, and that is not unlike the Idrisi account: It is "a monument composed of twelve great stones, surmounted by a cupola also of stone" (Adler 135–36). A pile of stones set up to mark a sacred site was a widespread practice in the Middle East, as elsewhere. The cupola is what we see in the Benynahu manuscript. It was probably erected by the local Muslim builders, and, of course, had to be repaired over the centuries. Close to the period when the Benyanahu sheet was done, the Arab historian Mujir al-Din mentioned above (1495) also finds the domed Rachel monument on the side of the road. "Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is the tomb of Rachel, mother of Joseph the Righteous (may he be blessed); it is at the side of the road . . . and [it is] beneath a dome . . . It is a celebrated pilgrimage cite" (Mujir 202, translation from the French, mine). Rabbi Obadiah who went around the same time says that Rachel's monument is "a round, vaulted building in the open road. We got down from our asses and prayed at the grave" (Adler 234). From the fourth century to the early modern period the grave of Rachel has been venerated by Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

The cupola of stone covering the monument cited by all these authors certainly accords with the image we have in the Benayahu sheet and else-

where. Another example is found in this sixteenth-century illustrated itinerary in the National Library of Israel (Rachel's tomb is represented at the top of fig. 9). It has a typical Islamic horseshoe arch representing the dome. The tomb itself is depicted as being made of nine well-cut stones, and a lamp hangs above. It is most likely that since both of these representations were done in Palestine and Rachel's monument was not far outside of Jerusalem, a dome must have continuously covered whatever was there "on the side of the road" marking Rachel's tomb. Unlike the Benayahu sheet, this example from the National Library of Israel is an actual scroll, not just a copy of one (it measures 140 cm × 12.2 cm). The tomb itself is represented as being made of nine well-cut stones, and the lamp hangs above.

Just as on the Benayahu manuscript, a scroll in the National Library of Israel also has a representation of what are called the Temple and the School of Solomon on the present-day Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif (fig. 9). They are depicted toward the center and below the Rachel monument. As on the Benayahu sheet, the structures are represented as if viewed from the East; thus the Temple is on the right and the School of Solomon on the left. The Temple is depicted as the Dome of the Rock, and the School of Solomon is in the place of the al-Aqsa mosque. The reason for this goes deep into Jewish history.⁶ Since the early years of the first millennium CE, Jews had kept in memory the idea that the large bedrock protruding from the platform, which had supported Herod's destroyed Temple, was the Rock known in the Talmud as the *Even ha-Shetiya*, the Foundation Stone. For centuries after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, Jews went to the site and mourned there. With the coming of Islam, a shrine, the Dome of the Rock, was eventually built at that site, and initially Jews participated in caring for that shrine, keeping the candles lit and the lamps shined. When the crusaders arrived, they conflated the Muslim Dome of the Rock with the Jewish Temple and pictured Christological scenes within it, though on some level they knew that the Temple of Jesus' time had been destroyed, as he is said to have predicted. Jews likewise came to call this site the Temple, the *Beit ha-Mikdash*. We will see below that in example after example, the Dome of the Rock is so labeled.⁷

The two illustrated itinerary manuscripts presented so far also include a formulaic "representation" of a huge complex, what the Jews thought of as the palace/burial place of the Kings of the House of David. In the Benayahu

⁶ See Berger, *Crescent*.

⁷ For a complete history of this phenomenon see, Berger, *Crescent*.



Figure 9. Itinerary in the form of a Scroll. “Yihus ha-Avor” (detail). Palestine, c. 1500s. Tempera and ink on Parchment, 140 × 12.2 cm., Ms. Heb. 8° 1187, Department of Manuscripts, The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.



Figure 10. Scroll with Pilgrimage Sites. “Yihus ha-Avot” (detail). Safed, 1564. Scribe: Uri son of Simon of Biella. Tempera and Ink on Parchment, 219.3 × 19.5 cm., Ms. Heb. 8° 6947, Department of Manuscripts, The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

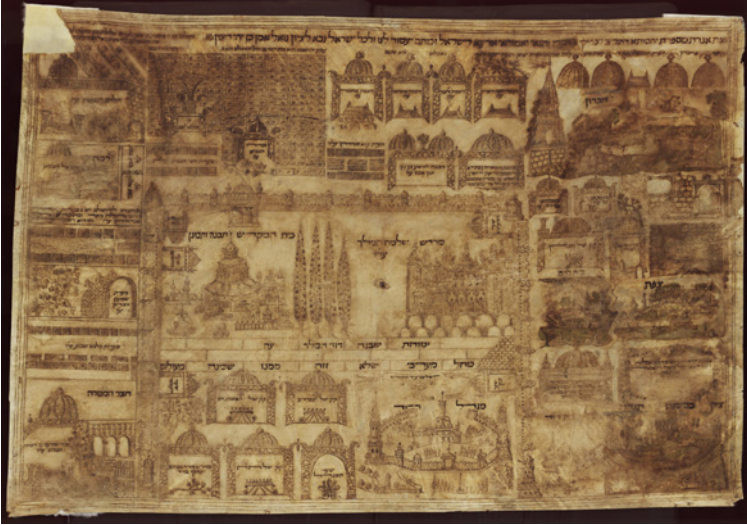


Figure 11. Shmuel ben Yishai. *Jerusalem View of the Holy Places*. Senigallia, Italy, 1722, V. 1090.6, Department of Archives, The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.



Figure 12. Detail of Shmuel ben Yishai's *Cambridge View of the Holy Places*, c. 1700–1750. The Temple depicted as the Dome of the Rock. Watercolor, 46 × 67 cm. Cambridge University Library. Add. 431. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Figure 13. Detail of Shmuel ben Yishai's *Cambridge View of the Holy Places*, c. 1700–1750. The So-called "Tower of David," or Kings of the House of David. Watercolor. Cambridge University Library. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Figure 14. Detail of Shmuel ben Yishai's Cambridge *View of the Holy Places*, c. 1700–1750. Samuel's site in Rama. Watercolor. Cambridge University Library. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

manuscript it is represented by the three arches at the top of the second row from the right (fig. 3), and in the Jewish National Library scroll it is represented at the bottom left (fig. 9). The structure has also been called the Citadel since Roman times. Though the Christians recognized its connection to David, they also have placed within it the room where Jesus instituted the Eucharist, and thus for Christians it is sometimes called the Place of the Last Supper (Coenaculum or Cenacle) or the Upper Room of Zion. For Muslims it is the Masjid al-Nabi Da'ud (Mosque of the Prophet David), or Qabr (Tomb) al-Nabi Da'ud (Natsheh 659). This large complex just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem has foundations resting on bedrock that go back to the eighth century BCE. Archeological investigations have shown that the Hasmonean kings built fortifications here, and Herod the Great reinforced them and added three towers. Of those three towers only the one at the northeast still remains. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, recounts that the people of Jerusalem made a

stand there when the Romans destroyed the city in 70 CE, after which the complex became a camp for the tenth legion (Josephus, *Wars* VI, 7, 1).

The earliest visitor to mention the site is the anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux in 333 CE: “Inside the wall of Sion, is seen the place where was David’s palace” (7b, 592). The first surviving text to call it “David’s Tower” is that of the Italian monk Antoninus Piacenza, who, in 570, states that Christians climbed this “Tower of David” and spent the night there in prayer (Hawari 496). When the Muslims came into the city, they incorporated the walls and towers into an Islamic Citadel, a structure that was noted by Muqaddasi in the tenth century (Hawari 496). When the crusaders attacked in 1099, the Fatimids fought their last stand here, and when they lost, the site served as the crusaders’ seat. They called it “*Turris David*” while they were in power.

Benjamin of Tudela, who was there around 1170, discusses what he calls the “Tower of David.” He says that about ten yards of the base of the structure are very ancient, having been built by “our ancestors;” the remaining part was added by the Mohammedans (Benjamin of Tudela 391–92). This is a rather astute observation, since the lower parts of that tower are of different masonry, i.e. Herodian. Benjamin also says that the complex includes the sepulchers of the kings who ruled after David, thereby feeding into the tradition that this is the burial place of the Kings of the House of David, a name used on the Jewish itineraries cited so far (Benjamin of Tudela 393). He recounts an anecdote current at the time when the crusaders were still in control of the city. Two workmen repairing the foundation happened upon a cavern containing a table with a golden scepter and crown. This cavern, they surmised, contained the tomb of David; and to the left was the tomb of Solomon and of all the kings of Judah (It is the tomb of Solomon that is specified in the *Benyanahu* sheet). Before they could examine the tombs, a burst of wind came from the mouth of the cave and threw them to the floor, almost killing them. A rabbi was summoned, and he confirmed that this indeed was the sepulcher of the house of David and the kings of Judah. The Christian Patriarch ordered the place walled up; and so it remained, Benjamin tells us, until the 1170s when he arrived.

The Muslims recaptured the complex when Saladin took Jerusalem in 1187. The Muslim historian, Imad al-Din, writing about those events called it the Oratory of David, and he indicates that upon recapture, it was put in the hands of the Muslim governor. The sultan at the time restored

it and “established there a prayer leader, muezzins, and guards. It is a center for the pious, the goal of visitors morning and evening. It was Saladin who gave it new life and beauty and enabled visitors to enjoy it... The place where this fortress was built had been the house of David and Solomon (God’s blessing on both of them), where people went to find them” (qtd. in Peters 352). Thus we learn that when Saladin re-conquered the city in 1187, he restored the Citadel, and made it a place for Muslim prayer.

From the mid-fifteenth century on, the Mamluks were converting some lower vaults of the complex into a mosque, and the work continued over a hundred-year period. It must have been ongoing when the first surviving un-illustrated itineraries were drawn up, i.e. in the late fifteenth century. The Jewish pilgrim Meshullam ben R. Menahem, visited then and records that on the southern side of Jerusalem “is Mount Zion, that is the city of David... The place of David’s burial is a house which has a great iron door, and the Moslems take care of the key and honour the place and pray there” (Adler 192).

By the early sixteenth century, when the models for these pilgrimage manuscripts must have been illustrated, the structure was, on the outside, an irregular walled rectangle with five towers. The structure is essentially early Mamluk, though some restoration was done in the 1530s under Suleiman the Magnificent. On the inside were halls, courtyards, three mosques, a minaret, and a special space constructed by the crusaders in which the Room of the Last Supper is located (Natsheh 659). In short it would have been quite a complicated structure to suggest visually, even if the various artists who represented it had wanted to. Understandably they opted for a simple emblematic formula. They chose to draw only what could be envisioned as the burial places of David and Solomon, which were believed at that time to have been inside the complex.

In the Benayahu sheet, the site is depicted at the top of the second row from the right (fig. 3). It is pictured as a three-arched structure with a roof of four courses of masonry and a saw-toothed parapet on top. In the scroll from the National Library of Israel, the depiction is emblematic as well (fig. 9, bottom of the illustration): four arches with hanging lamps and a simple roof, and beneath the lamps are the words “Kings of the House of David.” Another sixteenth-century example appears on a scroll executed in Safed in 1564 by Uri son of Simon of Biella (fig. 10, bottom left of illustration). The depiction on the Safed scroll exhibits more three-dimensionality,

and retains the tradition of the arches, the lamps, and the palette restricted to two or three colors. Here some actual tombs are shown beneath the lamps. They are meant to be the tombs of the “Kings of the House of David” as the inscriptions indicate.

In the late 1600s when the Ottoman noble Evliya Tshelebi traveled to Jerusalem he described the Citadel as “a square, strong fortress of huge construction, each ashlar having the size of a lion or the hind-parts of an elephant” (Tshelebi 63). He had been led to believe that David built the tower and dwelling, and that within was a smaller inner fortress where he counted seventy stone-built rooms. “The corner tower of the right-hand side of the entrance to the Citadel is the tower and noble dwelling built by David himself. For sentimental reasons it is not inhabited but used as an ammunition depot and treasury... Verily, there is no doubt whatever about its having been constructed by spirits” (Tshelebi 66–67). Tshelebi further remarks that the fortress walls surround forty houses, all Muslim quarters, and a Friday mosque as well (Tshelebi 68). David and the “spirits” were responsible for the construction. We have a more rational description from the mid-eighteenth-century pen of one Elzear Horn who was there between 1724 and 1744. Horn was a member of the Franciscan community in Jerusalem. He tells us that first the Pisans, and subsequently the Saracens (Arabs) occupied the castle. He names the Ottoman sultan, Selim, (ruled 1512–1520), as the one who restored it with carefully dressed stones, “as is evident from the upper part of the structure, which looks new in comparison to the other” (qtd. in Peters 482).

By the eighteenth century, some scrolls or sheets had a less abstract representation of the complex associated with the “David” site. During the first half of the century, some itineraria were brought from the Holy Land to Italy and were copied in Sengallia. The copies came to be called “Views of the Holy Places.” The artist, Shmuel ben Yishai, executed at least two of these sheets, one now in Jerusalem (fig. 11) and another in Cambridge (figs. 12, 13, 14). Both the Jerusalem and the Cambridge sheets have representations of the Holy City. In the Cambridge depiction, the Temple of the End of Days hovers above Jerusalem (fig. 12). Configured as the Dome of the Rock, the Temple is placed on an octagonal platform, with an ambulatory and a drum with windows supporting a dome. The scroll wafting above the Temple has a quotation from Haggai 2:9: “‘The Glory of the later House shall be greater than that of the former one,’ said the Lord of

Hosts.” This image and inscription were widely known for, as mentioned above, they had been used as a Hebrew printer’s mark in the mid-sixteenth century by the printer Giustiniani working out of Venice (fig. 6).⁸

Both sheets also have included an image of the David complex (fig. 13). During the first part of the eighteenth century when this “View of the Holy Places” was completed, the Citadel had been used to house a large number of Janissaries who were brought in to quell the revolt of 1702–1705. Perhaps the banner on top of the central tower relates to that phase in the Citadel’s use. The various domed buildings within are cursorily represented, but the minaret on the right of the Citadel is given some attention. It has a cylindrical shaft, the slight suggestion of *muqarnas*, a balcony from which to call prayer, and an ovoid dome topped with a finial. It is rather squat, and has the slit windows familiar from other Ottoman minarets (Natsheh 660). That minaret, still standing to this day, looks somewhat like the representation in a nineteenth-century drawing by Pierotti (fig. 18). A crenellated wall punctuated with four or five towers is depicted in front of the complex, perhaps meant to suggest the actual wall around the fortress.

On the far left near the top of this “View of Holy Places” is the emblematic representation of Rama (Ramah, Ramatha, Ramla), mentioned in the Bible as the home of Samuel (1 Samuel 7:17) (fig. 14). This pilgrimage site is northwest of Jerusalem and has a variety of names in different documents: Arabs call it Nabi Samwil, (also Dair Shamwil); Christians call it Mar Samwil, i.e. “the convent of Samuel.” This artist depicts it as a town with a wall going round it and the name Rama above. To the right of the town, within two decorative rectangles, are the names Hannah and Elkana, the parents of Samuel. Apparently not only were Samuel’s mother and father said to be buried there, but also two of Samuel’s sons. All were believed to have been interred in a cave beneath the actual structure.

The Byzantines may have built a church at the site early on, for at some point before 527 CE a traveler called Theodosius mentions it: “From Jerusalem it is five miles to Ramatha, the resting-place of Samuel” (Wilkinson 107). And Justinian’s biographer Procopius recounts that the emperor constructed a well or cistern at the site (Wilkinson 127). When the crusaders arrived they first viewed Jerusalem from a small hill near what was still considered the resting place of Samuel. It was on this hill that a Premon-

⁸ See discussion above and in Berger, *Crescent*.

stratensian monastery was built in 1141. The crusaders called it *Mons Gaudii*, *Mont Joye*, to memorialize the joy they had felt upon first viewing Jerusalem from this spot (Praver 17). Benjamin of Tudela was told that before the Crusader occupation, Samuel's sepulcher had been there, and a Jewish synagogue as well, but when the crusaders came, they removed his remains to Shiloh, where they built a "large place of worship over them, called St. Samuel of Shiloh" (Benjamin of Tudela 396). When the crusaders left the area, however, the remains were moved back. Between 1238 and 1244 a Rabbi Jacob came to Ramah from Jerusalem. "In Ramah is the grave of Samuel . . . and the grave of Hannah his mother, in a very beautiful building. In front is a Moslem Mosque, and nearby a well which is said to be Hannah's bath" (Adler 121). Thus by this time the remains of Samuel had been returned. Rabbi Jacob provides evidence that Muslims regarded this site as holy also, for a mosque had been built there. It is telling that a well was nearby—purportedly the place where Samuel's mother bathed. Wells connected with biblical figures, as we have mentioned, usually carry sacred connotations from the far-distant past.

In the late fifteenth century, both Jews and Muslims make note of Samuel's site. Mujir al-Din al-Ulaymi, writing in the late fifteenth-century, remarks that the tomb of Samuel is found in a village situated to the north of Jerusalem on the road that leads to Ramleh. "The Jews call this village Rama" (Mujir 28, translation mine). At around the same time, Rabbi Meshullam ben R. Menahem takes note of the site calling it "Ramah, the place of our Lord the Prophet Samuel" (Adler 192). When Meshullam ascended to the top of the hill at Ramah, he "saw a fortified town with high turrets in ruins . . . and the single house shut up which the Jews hold as a house of prayer . . . It is beautiful and has high vaulting" (Adler 192–93). What Meshullam was viewing were rooms that had probably been created during the crusader era, but, in the late fifteenth century, were cared for by Jews under Muslim rule. "There was a stone staircase going down to the cave . . . and there is a synagogue in which a perpetual light is burning. Here is the tomb of our Lord Samuel, the prophet, on whom be peace, and his father Elkanah, and his mother, Hannah, and his two sons" (Adler 193). Meshullam learns that on the twenty-eighth of Iyar, over a thousand Jews come there to pray. Meshullam also notes that

all around Jerusalem there are many caves and in them are buried many pious and saintly people without number, but we do not know who they are except those marked; but it is a tradition amongst us from

mouth to mouth from ancient times that there is no doubt as to their truth, and we see that the Moslems also honour all these places and that they have the same traditions about them as we. (Adler 193–94)

Thus for a least a thousand years, i.e. since Byzantine times, Christians, Jews and eventually Muslims recognized the importance of these holy places, honored them, and had similar traditions about the kind of veneration due to each figure.

Shmuel ben Yishai does indeed represent Rama as the “fortified town with high turrets in ruins” that Meshullam describes (fig. 14). A wall surrounds the town and that wall turns into a kind of sinuous cloth on the right. As in this illustration, other prints and drawings of Rama from the



Figure 15. Scroll with Pilgrimage Sites. “Yihus ha-Avot,” Samuel’s site (detail). Safed, 1564. Scribe: Uri son of Simon of Biella. Tempera and Ink on Parchment, 219.3 × 19.5 cm, Ms. Heb. 8° 6947, Department of Manuscripts, The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

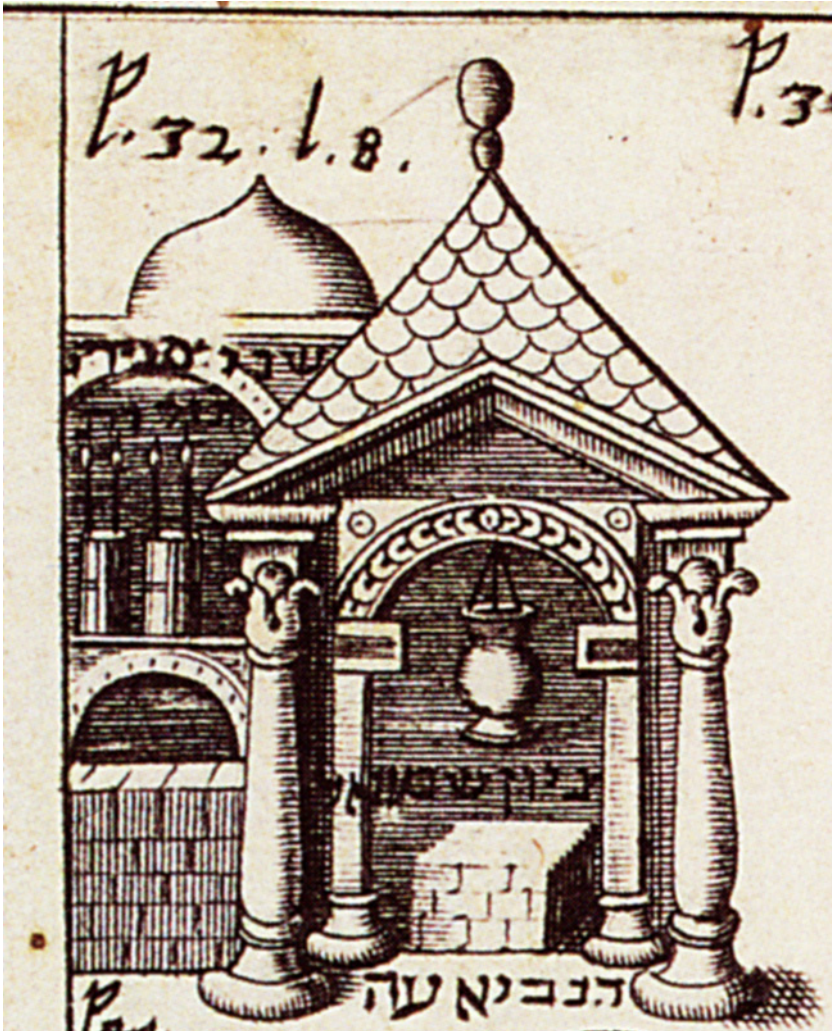


Figure 16. *Cippi Hebraici*. “Samuel’s tomb” (detail). Printed by J. H. Hottinger. Heidelberg, Germany, 1659. Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv.

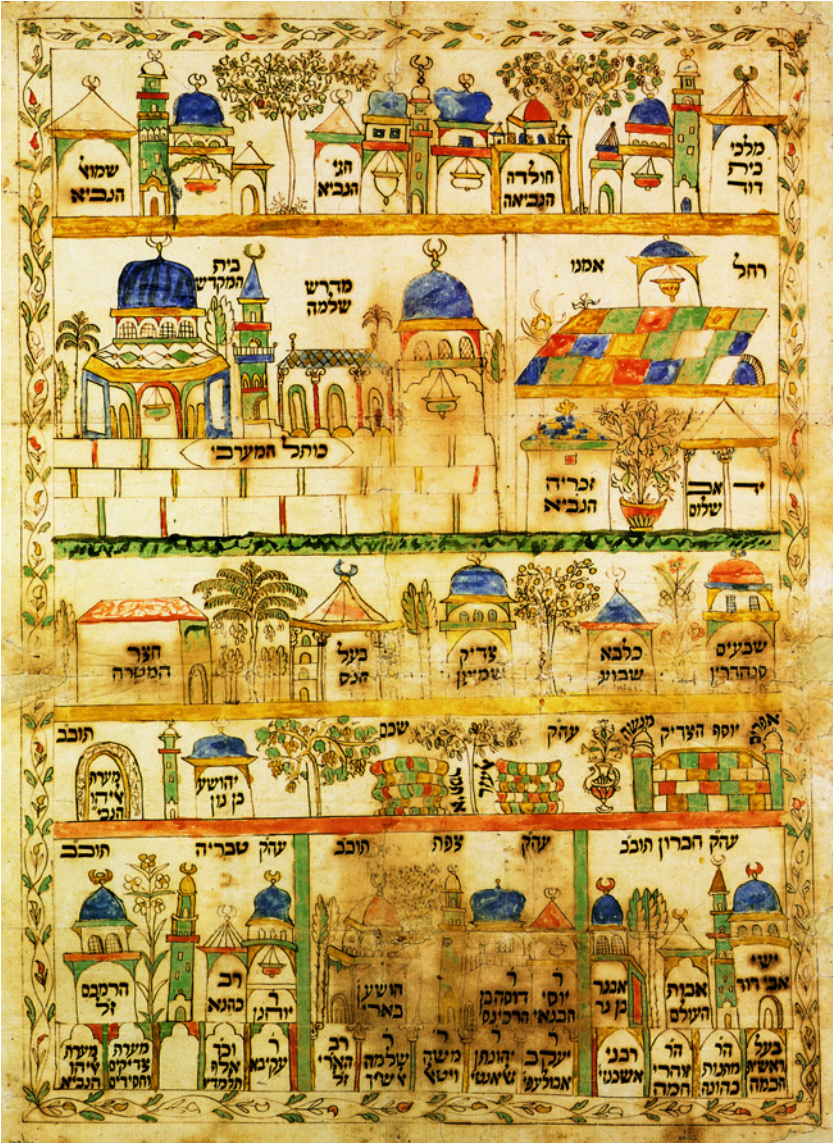


Figure 17. View of the Holy Places. Palestine, 1800s. Water color and ink on paper, 65.6 × 48. Collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo Copyright: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



Figure 18. Ermete Pierotti. *Citadel, Coenaculum and so-called Tomb of David (or Kings of the House of David)*. Lithograph. Pierotti, Ermete, *Jerusalem Explored* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1864).

fifteenth through the seventeenth century depict several towers, in particular the tall square tower on the right, called the White Tower, or the White Mosque Tower (Vilnay 115–16). And one of the domed structures to the left may be a depiction of the minaret of the Great Mosque, which, in the thirteenth century, had been a crusader church (Vilnay 115). One of the fullest articulations of what is purported to be the actual “Tomb” of Samuel at Rama is on the sixteenth-century scroll done in Safed in 1564 by Uri son of Simeon of Biella (fig. 15). The Samuel site is on the left side. Uri gives us quite a graphic rendering. The cubic tomb itself is defined as resting under a hanging lamp beneath an arch, surmounted by a pediment. The tomb monument is depicted on this Jewish scroll with a pointed roof and a crescent on top. To the left is another structure with a dome, an arch, and four candles below. This representation of Samuel’s site, or an image very much like it, was used as a model for his tomb as depicted on a frontispiece for the *Cippi Hebraici*, a Latin translation of the *Yibus* (the “Genealogy of the Patriarchs”) printed by J. H. Hottinger in Heidelberg in 1659 (fig. 16).

The tradition of making large sheets or wall hangings representing pilgrimage sites continued unabated in nineteenth-century Jerusalem. Usually the same sites are depicted: Hebron with the tombs of the patriarch and matriarchs; Rachel's tomb; the site of the Kings of the House of David; Samuel's grave, and others. One of these sheets, a watercolor called "View of the Holy Places," will serve as an example of the Jewish works of art that represent, with Islamic features, the tombs and monuments jointly venerated by Jews and Muslims (fig. 17). At the top right-hand corner is a complex of buildings meant to show the "resting place" of the Kings of the House of David. As with most of the other structures on this sheet, Islamic crescents surmount the buildings. Though this is a formulaic representation, some naturalistic conventions were observed, such as the fact that several structures do make up this "David" site, one of which is a minaret towering above. It is worth comparing the stylistic features of the nineteenth-century minaret drawn by Pierotti with the one depicted in this watercolor (fig. 18). Both have a cylindrical tower; a molding, here indicated in red, separates the cylinder from the upper support. A yellow molding indicates the prayer balcony. The dome, slightly bulbous, is supported on another yellow molding, and on top is the crescent. It is evident that the major features of the minaret are present in this watercolor.

A monument commemorating the grave of Samuel is in the upper left-hand corner. The image is the reverse of what we saw in Uri's rendering and in the *Cippi Hebraici*. Now the pedimented structure is on the left and dome building on the right. Between them is a minaret. It is represented with an arched portal, an arcuated lintel above it, a shaft with four windows, four arches, and then above, two galleries going around the upper section from which the muezzin would call the faithful to prayer. The minaret is covered by an onion-shaped dome and topped by a large Islamic crescent. The two other structures that are part of the Samuel shrine also have large crescents as finials, just as they are depicted on the "Kings of the House of David" complex. It is understandable why Jewish artists would draw these holy shrines with architectural elements bespeaking Islamic style. The domes as well as the lobed and horseshoe arches actually did characterize some of these buildings. But what one might find curious is the fact that the crescent, a Muslim religious symbol, was not omitted, but rather was valorized by the artist, made large and imposing, put front and center. For instance, minarets also serve as finials above the tombs of Haggai and the prophetess Hulda at the top center of the sheet. It is true that at this period, many of these sites were maintained by Muslims, and inside

some of them were mosques or small prayer rooms with a niche [*mibrab*] in the south wall directing the faithful toward Mecca. Jewish artists, however, could have omitted the crescent symbol if they had felt that Jews would be adverse to seeing it on a religious work of art meant to be an object of contemplation. Even those itineraria created to elicit funds for the Holy Land from Jews in the diaspora displayed crescents above the shrines. Thus, it is clear that the Islamic crescents were viewed by both Jews in the Holy Land as well as those in the diaspora as innocuous. Apparently neither the artists nor the patrons felt that the Islamic crescents diminished in the slightest the sacredness of the shrines.

The pilgrimage sites featured on this sheet and accorded the greatest space is the *Beit ha-Mikdash* i.e. the Temple (second row far left). The *Midrash Shlomo*, i.e. the School of Solomon, is to the right of the Temple. As on all these itineraries what is labeled as the Temple has the form of the Dome of the Rock. The School of Solomon is in the spot where the Al-Aqsa mosque stands and, like the mosque, it features a dome.⁹ Between them is a minaret that, apart from its pyramidal spire, is somewhat reflective of the Ghawanima Minaret at the northwest corner of the sacred esplanade. It displays a prominent muezzin's balcony, with two stories of arches below. A canopy covers the balcony and there are arched openings above it. Each of the minarets on this sheet—and there are eight of them—is slightly different from the others in coloration or architectural components, but all are featured prominently. Below the buildings depicted on the sacred esplanade is the Western Wall, configured with ashlar masonry. Gradually, toward the mid-twentieth century, it is the Western Wall that will be valorized as the chief cultic site to be celebrated in Jewish arts and crafts.

To the right, on the same row as the “Temple” is the tomb of Rachel. Her shrine is shown with the cupola on top just as in the itineraries. The colorful checkerboard pattern beneath it is an attempt to represent the courtyard or enclosure around the tomb depicted in sixteenth and seventeenth century prints (Vilnay 70). The two monuments below the Rachel site are the “Yad Absalom” (literally the “Hand of Absalom”) and the “Tomb” of Zechariah. Those are the Hellenistic monuments situated on the hill to the east of the Sacred Esplanade (figs. 1 and 2). They have both been represented on the sixteenth-century manuscripts we have discussed, and are regularly depicted on the other “pilgrimage” works of art. They are

⁹ See Berger, *Crescent* for a full discussion of these structures.

misabeled here, for the one with the palmette on top should be called the Yad Absalom, or the Hand of Absalom. There is no way to know what these Hellenistic monuments were originally intended as. Later folklore attributes the creation of the Absalom monument to the biblical son of David who, because he died without a son to keep his name in remembrance, set up a monument for himself (2 Samuel 18:18). Nineteenth-century artists recorded Jews and Arabs throwing stones at the Yad Absalom to commemorate the fact that the son had rebelled against his father. Though pilgrims of all three faiths remark upon both of these monuments, they are of minor importance.

The next two rows also display some of the sites present on the other pilgrimage manuscripts including, for instance, the site of the Seventy of the Sanhedrin, with the orange dome, found on the extreme right beneath the green horizontal band (fourth row, beneath the Absalom monument). The Sanhedrin was a body of judges and legislators who, probably since the Hasmonean kingdom in the second century BCE, were responsible for the moral and legal wellbeing of the community. The idea of there being seventy Hebrew “prophets” with a tomb or monument dedicated to them was known among Muslims as well. Nasir-i Khusraw mentions that he saw, in the mid-eleventh century, what was thought of as their tombs under a great platform (Le Strange 337). Once again we are confronted with an ostensibly Jewish monument that had probably been a site that Muslim venerated over the centuries—an explanation of why on this sheet such a collective gravesite should be surmounted by an Islamic crescent. Another example of a jointly acknowledged site here is in the row second from the bottom, the tomb of Joshua son of Nun (second from the left with the blue roof). The tomb is depicted as being just above the town of Tiberias. The same author, Nasir-i Khusraw, mentions that to the west of Tiberias, in the colonnade of a mosque there “is the tomb of Yusha’ibn Nun [Joshua son of Nun]” (Le Strange 37). Jewish pilgrims have also placed Joshua’s tomb in the Upper Galilee; for instance, Rabbi Petachia saw it there close to a spring (Adler 87). Thus the figure of Joshua, and a site or sites associated with his grave, was known to both Jews and Muslims. The artist has once again drawn a crescent over this tomb.

In the second row from the bottom, at the right border, is a red, green, yellow, and white wall with flanking towers. It is meant to represent the shrine of Joseph the Righteous (son of Jacob); the two pillars bear the names of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Though some pilgrims write about a Joseph tomb at Hebron, the biblical tradition holds that he was

buried at Shechem, which is present-day Nablus: “The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up with them from Egypt, they buried in Sichem” (Joshua 24:32). That is where Benjamin of Tudela saw his tomb in the late twelfth century. He says that the area is the “abode of about one hundred Cutheans, who observe the Mosaic law only, and are called Samaritans,” who have for centuries been in conflict with rabbinic Judaism. The Samaritans are in possession of “the tomb of Joseph the righteous, the son of our father Jacob.” Then he paraphrases the biblical passage from Joshua (Benjamin of Tudela 390). This site was mentioned as early as 333 CE by the Christian pilgrim of Bordeaux. At Shechem he sees “a tomb in which Joseph is laid” (588).

Joseph is a major prophet in the Quran as well (Suras VI, 85; XL, 34, and all of Sura xii). 'Ali of Herat, writing in 1173, says that near Nablus is the spring of Elijah, and “the field of Yusuf as Sadik [Joseph the Righteous]; further, Joseph is buried at the foot of the tree at this place, and this is the true story” (Le Strange 512). Later, in the twelfth century, Jacob Ha Cohen recounts that on his stop in Shechem, he saw the “cave” where Joseph was buried. Candles are lit there every evening (Adler 96). In 1219 Samuel ben Samson saw the sepulcher as well. Through the centuries pilgrims of all three Abrahamic faiths have visited the site. In 1838, William Cook Taylor could write: “The present monument . . . is a place of resort, not only for Jews and Christians, but Mohammedans and Samaritans; all of whom concur in the belief that it stands on the veritable spot where the patriarch was buried” (Taylor 206). Its history in the second half of the twentieth and in the twenty-first century has been tragic. Violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians have erupted there, and the site is still under bitter contention as of this writing.

To the left and above the Joseph site, near the center of the sheet, is a monument with a blue domed roof dedicated to Simeon the Righteous (or, sometimes translated as “Simeon the Just”). The identity of this Simeon is fluid. Is he the Jewish High Priest who is described by Josephus as meeting Alexander the Great? That Simeon is the earliest and most eminent. But even those who came to the tomb did not profess to really know if some other Simeon was buried at the site. Rabbi Jechiel of Paris, who was in the Holy Land between 1238–1244, saw what he thought of as Simeon's tomb near Jerusalem; it was in an old rock-hewn sepulcher (Adler 119). A Latin inscription was originally incised in the wall and indicated that the tomb had once been the resting place of a Roman lady (Hanauer 54). The site was still known in the nineteenth century. Wasif

Jawhariyyeh, a Palestinian Arab writing between 1904–1917 had a personal recollection of it. His words give us a sense of what it meant to gather at the tomb of Simeon the Just in his day:

There were two caves in Sheikh Jarrah . . . which Jews believed to be the tomb of Shimon the Just. Jewish pilgrims visited this sanctuary twice a year when they would spend the whole day in the olive groves. Most of those were Eastern Jews who kept their Arab traditions. They had a number of instrumental musical bands, [composed of] the oud and violin. [The singer] had a beautiful voice and would sing mostly Andalusian scores. Jerusalem Christians and Muslims would share their Jewish compatriots' day-long activities of singing and festivities in the picnic known as the Yehudia. The slopes of Sheikh Jarrah would be teeming with participants, as well as with peddlers. My brothers and I never missed this festival. (qtd. in Tamari 14)

This recollection reveals that the joint celebrations at this site were enjoyed by both Arabs and Jews in the early years of the twentieth century. Now, a hundred years later, the remembrance of the shared festivities is gone. In the last couple of years, the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood has been the site of violent clashes between those Israelis who want to take over the area exclusively for Jews, and those Arabs and Jews trying to protect the area from that encroachment.

At the bottom of the page are three square or rectangular spaces with a variety of buildings and tombs. They are labeled, right to left, "Hebron," "Safed," and "Tiberias." These towns are represented by emblematic images of the tombs of rabbis and sages, and on top are large Islamic crescents. Safed and Tiberias did have a sizable Jewish population at the time this watercolor was made, though the Jews were outnumbered by Arabs (Ben-Arieh 66). The town of Tiberias, on a large lake, is described by the Arab historian and geographer, Yakubi, writing as early as the year 874 (Le Strange 334–35). He mentions the lake, then talks about its hot springs, which run from conduits into the baths. Nasir-i Khusraw writing in the mid-eleventh century describes the springs as an important ceremonial site. It stands at the gate of the mosque over which they have built a hot bath, the waters of which must be mixed with cool waters before one can use them for ceremonial ablutions (Le Strange 337). "They say this hot bath was built by Solomon, the son of David—peace be upon them both!—and I myself did visit it" (Le Strange 337). Century after century

the Muslims visitors extolled the town and its waters, especially their therapeutic properties. Mukaddasi, also of the eleventh century reports: “Those who suffer from the scab, or ulcers, or sores . . . come to bathe here [in the hot springs] . . . and then afterwards they dip in the water of another spring, which is cold, whereupon—if Allah vouchsafe it to them—they become cured” (Le Strange 335–36). Such a therapeutic center was bound to see the proliferation of holy tomb sites.

In the late fifteenth century, more Jews came to Tiberias, as attacks against them intensified in re-Christianized Spain. Many came to settle in the Galilee, particularly in and around Safed and Tiberias (Ben-Sasson 103–4). With the upsurge of Jews, more tombs were “identified.” The tombs of the great scholars and mystics were discovered, and the place became a kind of rabbinic holy land, though large numbers of Muslims lived in the towns as well. Moses Basola, of Pesaro, Italy, is among those who tell us what Safed was like as a result of this immigration. He gives us a view of Jews living and working amongst Muslims in about 1523. It was a rather prosperous environment, with artisans, commerce, and trade:

You find there plenty of *botechi* [shops] of woolen clothes, as well as of *merceria* and spices . . . Many shops belong to Jews; they bring the *merceria* and spices from Damascus and sell in the town. With the *galeas* [galleys] they go to Beirut to buy cloth and other things. There are also many Jews peddling around continuously in the villages to sell *merceria* and other peddlars’ ware . . . for many earn also by buying cotton, thread, wax, salmonea [a medicine] when prices are on the cheap side, and sell them in proper time. There are also Jews in the market selling fruit, vegetables, oil, cheese and other merchandise. Anyone who wants may deal in corn, wine and oil, each in its time. Generally, the country is much more *mercandatesca* than Italy, for Ishmaelites will buy much more willingly from Jews than from others. One who has no capital to start in commerce, has to be an artisan . . . weavers, goldsmiths, shoemakers, tanners, and masons. (qtd. in Ben-Sasson 107)

The kabbalist R. Hayim Vital (1543–1620) gives us the mystic’s view of Safed. He kept a notebook of his dreams, and in one of them he saw himself “on top of the great mountain west of Safed, amidst its two big peaks, which rise above Meron village” (Ben-Sasson 108). He incorporated into his dreams the actual life of the Muslim society around his community. He also saw the Messiah in an eschatological vision, seeing himself coming

down the stone steps of Safed, and going down to the market, where he observes a dervish-like figure singing about the mysteries of messianic redemption according to the Zohar (Ben-Sasson 109). For Jews, Safed was the center of the kabbalistic tradition in the sixteenth century and indeed through later centuries as well. Something of this tradition is memorialized in this “View of the Holy Land.” Both Safed and Tiberias are shown as being filled with the tombs of rabbis. Among them is the tomb of Rav ha-Ari (the Lion), the name for Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–1572), the great interpreter of the Kabbala. Luria’s tomb is in the bottom central rectangle, lowest row, farthest left, just beneath the orange-roofed building with the crescent. Luria’s students collected his mystical oral teachings and spread them out to the rest of the Jewish world. R. Hayim Vital, cited above, was one of the main interpreters of Luria’s thought. The domed building in the far left corner, next to the border, is labeled Rambam, the name by which the great twelfth-century scholar Moses Maimonides was known. The blue dome above his tomb also bears a crescent. One can only conclude that these actual buildings were topped by crescent-shaped finials, finials that never were objectionable to the Jews who would pray at these shrines. If they had been objectionable, surely the Jewish artist would not have made them so large and prominent.

The inclusion of Islamic crescents above the shrines of prophets and biblical figures is found in other Jewish imagery as well, as on this decorative cloth in the Jewish Museum in New York (fig. 19). It is from Italy and has been dated eighteenth or nineteenth century.¹⁰ Here the Temple and the School of Solomon are depicted in the innermost medallion. The Temple is labeled with the letters “Bet” and “Hey,” (for *Beit ha-Mikdash*) while the School of Solomon is spelled out in Hebrew letters. Between them the artist has placed a minaret. Islamic crescents top all three of these structures. In the circle surrounding the inner medallion are representations of seven gates of Jerusalem. The most important, the Gates of Mercy, are depicted directly at the top. As the pattern moves out toward the borders, the circle becomes an octagon, and within it are seventeen sites, most of which are tombs. This composition, the central sacred buildings of Jerusalem surrounded with pilgrimage sites, is reminiscent of twelfth-century maps of the holy city executed for pilgrims during crusader times.

¹⁰ Two other copies of this printed cloth are known to me: one in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem that has also been dated late eighteenth or early nineteenth century; another is in the Nahon Museum of Italian Jewry in Jerusalem.



Figure 19. Sabbath Cloth, Italy, late eighteenth-early nineteenth century. F4362. Photo by Malcolm Varon. Printed on un-dyed cotton, 108 × 108 cm. The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, U.S.A. Photo Credit: The Jewish Museum, New York/Art Resource, NY.

The tombs and shrines within the octagon are those we have seen in other works of art: at three o'clock is the tomb of King David and at around four is the site of Rachel; at five is the tomb of David's father Jesse; and Joshua's tomb is at about seven o'clock. Another group of sites deals with the story of Abner ben Ner told in 1 Samuel. In the four corners (starting upper left and going clockwise) are the tombs of the prophetess Hulda, a view of Safed, a view of Hebron with the monuments of the Patriarchs (all three of these sites have structures with crescents on top), and the Tomb of Samuel the prophet. The shrines within these four corners are represented with hanging mosque lamps and elaborate Islamic-like roof tiles. Most of these places have positive connotations for they supposedly house the remains of



Figure 21. Moshe Ben Yitzhak Mizרחי. “Amulet for Guarding the Home,” Late nineteenth-early twentieth century. Color lithograph on paper, 57.5 × 44.5 cm. Jerusalem. The Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv.

space. To the right of the depository is a snake, its mouth fixed on the lower part of the monument. Though Akiba's father-in-law repented in the end, the heroic daughter had unjustly suffered her father's wrath, and this was enough to connect Savua with a snake, the archetypal representation of evil.

The border of this Italian cloth is characterized by ornamental baroque flowers and vases. The strip framing the shrines contains a prayer praising the Holy Land and the city of Jerusalem. The depiction of the buildings appears to be in the tradition of the Benayahu manuscript, for both works display fanciful pedimented roofs with repeated triangles and guilloche patterns. The Benayahu manuscript was in Italy in the seventeenth century, and it received its coloration there, so a manuscript of the same style could have been among those works that inspired this spirited, playful rendition of the shrines. Though the three cloths coming out of this workshop are of uncertain date, they may have been some of the earliest to use this tight compositional organization featuring the Temple, the School of Solomon, and the Western Wall at the center, and the shrines circling around. Though the idea of shrines represented around a central walled Jerusalem goes back to the crusader maps of the Middle Ages, here the composition is given a more geometrical presentation. Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works of Jewish art employ this composition: a central medallion with encircling shrines in the octagon, all encompassed in a square.

One of the most common uses of the composition is found on a series of Sabbath tablecloths (Barnett 34–40) (fig. 20). Like in the Italian cloth, the composition centers around a stylized Temple Mount, with a domed building on the left labeled as the Temple (*Beit ha-Mikdash*); the School of Solomon (*Midrash Schlomo*) to the right, and a minaret between them. Islamic crescents are found on top of all three structures. In the lower half of the circle is the Western Wall (*Kotel Maariv*). Several Sabbath tablecloths such as these were embroidered by Jewish women in Jerusalem in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Barnett 34–39). Embroidery was an art practiced by the women of all faiths, whether they were originally Jerusalemites or from elsewhere, and embroidery designs could have been exchanged (Micklewright 291–300). Many of the shrines depicted here attracted the veneration of Jews, Muslims, and Christians: in the upper left quadrant (at about ten o'clock) is Hebron, which houses the patriarchs' tombs. The corners, starting in the upper right, have sites dedicated to the Kings of the House of David (i.e. the Citadel), Mother Rachel,

and Samuel, all figures important to Christians and Muslims as well as Jews. And these sites, on this and on other embroidered tablecloths, have the Islamic crescent at the top.

Most of these pilgrimage places retained their importance right up through the twentieth century. A remarkable lithograph by Moshe Shah Mizrachi (1860?–1930) testifies to the continued interest in holy sites and their protective and healing powers (fig. 21). This is one of a group of lithographs (as well as paintings and prints) meant to be hung on the wall of a home as protection against the evil eye.¹¹ In the center is the Temple in the guise of the Dome of the Rock, the structure meant to be the primary protective image in the lithograph. Though it is labeled the “Place” of our Temple, not *Beit ha-Mikdash*, the Temple, its prominence on the page indicates that in itself this Muslim shrine was seen by Jews as having apotropaic powers.¹² Why else would the shrine with its Islamic crescent be featured so prominently? Nearly all the inscriptions on this Mizrachi lithograph are intended to keep the home safe from harm, and a number of them have to do specifically with the birthing process.¹³ Some of the same inscriptions are also found on amulets directed at evil forces, warning them to depart from the expectant mother or from the child in her womb. Many are Kabbalistic phrases addressed to esoteric angels for protection, general well being, and economic prosperity of the household.¹⁴ The inscriptions also contain references to balm, salves, and various agents to promote healing.

As on the manuscripts, scrolls, hanging sheets, and tablecloths discussed above, most of the tombs, caves, and monuments in the circle around the central image of the Dome of the Rock are places where pilgrims of all three faiths would go to pray for health and healing, as well as for a fruitful and prosperous life. These sites have been mentioned in the Muslim and Jewish travel accounts cited above. To be sure, Mizrachi was adapting earlier pictorial models to create this lithograph; that fact is clear from the composition and the structures depicted. Here, however, the artist was striving for a realistic depiction of the shrines. In fact, though he lived and worked in Jerusalem, he may have used a photograph of the Dome of the

¹¹ See Berger, *Crescent*.

¹² See Berger, *Crescent*.

¹³ All inscriptions on the lithograph are translated by Avner Ash in the “Appendix” of Berger, *Crescent*.

¹⁴ Other examples of these kinds of inscriptions and invocations can be found in Hanauer 269–75.

Rock as a model, since the view he adopted resembles a well-known Bonfils photo. Likewise, the tombs of Rachel and Zechariah, the monument of Absalom and of several others bear a strong resemblance to the way the structures actually looked at the time, though of course the lively red, blue, yellow, and green palette is purely decorative. Mizrahi knew that his clients wanted these particular images, and that they wanted the domed Muslim shrine in the very center with its crescent on top. He would not have used this image in this context if it did not still hold that protective, magico-religious power when the lithograph was completed, some time in the late-nineteenth or early twentieth century.

As one would expect from the nature of the child-birth related inscriptions, at the very top is the tomb of Rachel, a site particularly frequented by pregnant women, or by women who wanted to become pregnant—women of all three faiths. As already remarked, in 333 CE the pilgrim of Bordeaux on his way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem wrote that on the right side of the road is the tomb of Rachel, wife of Jacob (8b). And numerous later travelers report seeing a “pillar” at the Rachel shrine, usually of eleven or twelve stones, each representing one of her sons. The Old Testament gives a brief account of her burial (Gen 35:19–20). And in the New Testament, Rachel is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew (2:17–18), for she is said to be lamenting and mourning the massacre of the innocent children whom Herod had ordered killed. With the arrival of Islam, a mosque was built on the site, and, as recounted above, Muslim travelers commented upon it. In 1841 Sir Moses Montefiore made some additions to the building; the restored tomb is the structure pictured on this lithograph. Rachel’s shrine remained a place of joint Muslim/Jewish/Christian veneration until the late twentieth century, when, tragically, it became the site of repeated violent confrontations as Israel tried to lay exclusive claim to it. In February 2010 the Netanyahu government announced that the Tomb of Rachel would become a Jewish National Heritage site. The site has been fortified and enveloped in barbed wire. There have been protests from the United Nations, the United States, Arab nations, and Palestinian Officials. As of this writing, all to no avail.

Some of the other shrines pictured here are those commonly seen on the various works of art reviewed in this study. In the upper right-hand corner (at one o’clock) is Hebron, here called the tombs of Machpelah (where the patriarchs and matriarchs are buried). At four o’clock is a site dedicated to Elisha, a prophet not commonly represented. However, he is appropriately included because of his miraculous cure of Naaman’s leprosy and for bring-

ing a boy back to life. At eight o'clock is a site commemorative of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. For Jews, they are the final three prophets to have prophesied; a Hellenistic monument associated with Zechariah is also represented at three o'clock. At nine is the monument connected with Absalom; and at eleven the site of the grave of Samuel. At ten o'clock is the Tomb of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, a second-century mystic who lived under Roman rule, after the destruction of the Temple. Supposedly he sat at the entrance to a cave for thirteen years hiding from the Romans who had tried to arrest him. There, accompanied by his son, he is said to have learned the mysteries of the Torah (Praver 6). According to tradition, his ideas formed the foundation of the mystical writings of the Zohar, which would not be set down until many centuries later. This Simeon is associated with exorcizing a demon from an emperor's daughter, and that is probably why he was regarded as a healer. His tomb was thought to be among those in Meron. As early as the twelfth century two Jewish travelers remarked on seeing it there (Adler 94, 108). In the thirteenth century "five wondrous wells" were noticed at the site. Candles were lit in order to find the source of the waters of the wells, but it could not be found (Praver 220). Some time between 1270–1291 Simeon bar Yohai's tomb was visited by an anonymous Jewish pilgrim. Upon viewing the burial place he remarked: "Here gather all of Israel and the Ishmaelites [Arabs] on [the] Second [day of] Passover. They pray here and read psalms. And when they see water coming out from inside the cave all rejoice, because this is a sign that the year will be fertile" (Praver 234).

The gathering at Simeon bar Yohai's tomb to witness the water coming forth is obviously a tradition which goes back far earlier than the thirteenth century. No doubt the event was awaited by all those for whom the spring waters meant a fruitful year, particularly the farmers, who, for the most part, were the Palestinian *fellahim*. This miraculous appearance of water celebrated at Meron was an event that inspired a major pilgrimage in the Galilee. For centuries, thousand of pilgrims, Jews and Muslims, awaited eagerly for the appearance of the water at this site (Reiner 12). At some point, those living on the land built a shrine nearby to valorize the importance of the place and they connected it with a holy figure. This same thirteenth-century anonymous Jewish pilgrim says a little later: "The Ishmaelites are usually building prayer houses near the [tombs of the] righteous [*sadiqim*]" (Praver 234).

At the bottom is the tomb of Simeon the Just (or Shimon, or Simon the Just or the Righteous). His tomb has been among the others in previously

presented works of art, but here it is prominently featured. As mentioned above there is some confusion as to which Simon the Just he was, but he is most commonly identified with the High Priest who met Alexander the Great when the latter came to Jerusalem in around 330 BCE. He is known for saying, “The world rests on three things: Torah, worship, and good deeds” (Mishnah, *Aboth* 1: 2, qtd. in Danby 446). Right through to the twentieth century, pilgrimage to the so-called Tomb of Simeon the Righteous continued, and Muslims joined in the more recent festivities that took place there, as the recollection by Wasif Jawhariyyeh cited above proves. He remembered the celebrations that occurred in the near-by olive grove twice a year when singers and instrumentalists would gather with the Jews, Christians, and Muslims for the daylong festivities (Tamari 14). Those festivities are at this point forgotten, for the site has become one of bitter contention; in the fall of 2010 some of the Palestinian residents were ousted in an effort to create an exclusively Jewish neighborhood.

This essay described a rich history of jointly venerated holy sites, a history going back millennia. Even before monotheism took hold, as each new religion was implanted, a process of syncretism had occurred: the sacred sites remained holy, but the figures that were venerated changed. And it was no different as the people on the land gradually converted to Islam. The ancient holy sites were adapted to the patterns of the new religion, but the holy places remained popular, and in many cases the name of the figure venerated remained the same. The new group absorbed and modulated the practices observed at that site: sometimes shoes had to be removed because one was standing on holy ground; sometimes specific ablutions were prescribed; an offering or a gift to the guardians might be required; or menstruating women might be denied entry. The code of conduct was a legacy of all who had sought help from the mysterious powers throughout the generations. And, since the tenth century, abundant textual evidence left by the pilgrims informs us of those practices and of the visits to the sites. Then, after 1948, many Muslim/Jewish gravesites were transformed, either gradually or abruptly, into exclusive Jewish pilgrimage sites, even when the figure to whom the site was dedicated had the same biblical roots. Over the ensuing sixty years a new exclusivity has taken hold.

The jointly venerated shrines pictured in the imagery and discussed here are only a few of those that are mentioned in Muslim and Jewish texts. At least sixty additional shrines have been listed or pictured just on the objects we have treated. Many of them were sites of joint veneration. Quite a few

of the illustrations feature minarets in the center or at the sides of the shrines and have crescent-shaped finials on top.¹⁵ Most of these shrines were cared for by the people on the land, primarily Muslims, but Arab Christians as well, and a good number were visited by members of all three of the Abrahamic religions. These shrines were also, no doubt, built and restored by the people who lived in the area; they employed simple domed architectural forms and other distinct Islamic architectural features. They are stone monuments, whitewashed, and mostly dome-crowned, as we see pictured in the itineraries, the views of the Holy Land, textiles, lithographs, and in other Jewish arts and crafts. In example after example, Jewish artists evidently had no problem placing the Islamic crescent on top of these jointly venerated shrines.

From 638 until 1919, while the Muslims were, in one form or another, in control of the area (with the exception of the crusaders' occupation, roughly from 1099 to the late thirteenth century), the Muslim and Christian people living in the towns and villages cared for many of the shrines that the Jews came to visit. In some cases, it was the Arabs who had built the structures marking the sites or protecting the tombs. The Jewish illustrations treated in this essay function as complements to the medieval and early modern texts that recount the Jewish and Muslim visits to the sites. The acceptance of this long-term joint veneration changed in the mid-twentieth century, when the new State of Israel transformed the way the land was viewed. Since 1949, the Israel Exploration Society has sought to lay claim to the land for the Jewish people and to provide "concrete documentation of the continuity of a historical thread that remained unbroken from the time of Joshua Bin Nun until the days of the conquerors of the Negev in our [mid-twentieth-century] generation" (qtd. in Benvenisti 11). The official state policy was to ignore the continuous habitation on the land by an agrarian people. Rather than recognize the deeply rooted nature of the Arab Muslim and Christian population, the advocates of a certain kind of Israeli nationalism presented a narrative according to which the land had always been Israeli, *Eretz Yisrael*, even though for over two millennia relatively few Jews lived there, either working the land or living in the cities and towns. This nationalist narrative gave the impression that the

¹⁵ For example, see Sarfati, *Offerings*, plate 26; Shadur plate 5.8. Numerous other examples exist on paper, cloth, and in various other media: in wall hangings (Bahrouzi, plates 3, 4, 6, 9); in paintings on glass (Bahrouzi, plates 11 & 12); on cloth (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett figure 231; Behrouzi 55).

Land of Israel had been under constant occupation by disparate rulers—Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Mamluks, and Ottomans—ignoring the fact that for nearly thirteen hundred years, the inhabitants were mostly Muslims, as well as some Christians, under Muslim suzerainty. The reality was that from the mid-seventh century on there was a continuous Muslim and Christian population living on the land, and it was they who eventually built the shrines, along with the mosques, forts, and some of the castles. Israel has ignored, or bulldozed, many of the Muslim villages and the shrines within or nearby.¹⁶ The structures that the Israelis did restore and care for are those that could be construed as “crusader,” since the crusaders’ former presence presented no threat to the dominant national narrative of a continuous Jewish homeland occupied by foreign powers. The crusaders had clearly been “temporary occupiers.” But the indigenous population was not an “occupier.” Though “Mamluks” and “Ottomans” may have been the suzerains, the indigenous population had not come from afar; they were at home. In valorizing the unthreatening crusader monuments, the Israelis often obliterated the many layers of earlier, and later Arab inhabitants. An example of this policy can be seen in Caesarea where Arab structures were removed and crusader buildings were made into tourist attractions.

With the war of 1948, the further Israeli conquests of 1967, and the continued bulldozing of the past decades, Arab villages and their surrounding fields and orchards were often destroyed. Many of the destroyed villages had a shrine, some three hundred of them according to one account (Khalidi 633). And, in the countryside, little by little, the “sacred” oaks, springs, and caves have been demolished or rededicated to a new Jewish “holy martyr” or “sage.” In this way, the State of Israel itself has taken over sites that were once centers of joint veneration. For example, after 1949 the graves that had been jointly venerated as those of the sons of Jacob were “redeemed” and transformed into pilgrimage sites exclusively for Jews. This “redemption” of graves included those of Reuben, Judah, Dan, and Benjamin—all sites mentioned as Muslim shrines by such Muslim writers as the twelfth-century ‘Ali of Herat and the fourteenth-century Muslim traveler, Ibn Battuta (Le Strange 341, 467, 458, 545; Benvenisti 274–79). This is ironic because from the beginning of Islam, Muslims have known the patriarchs and prophets. Some of the figures walking through

¹⁶ This destruction has been documented by Walid Khalidi in the book *All That Remains: The Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*.

the pages of the Hebrew Bible are also found in the Quran: Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Jethro, Joshua, and many others, so it is to be expected that sites connected with those figures should have been valorized by Muslims. Indeed, the earliest surviving pilgrimage accounts are first Christian (fourth century), and then Muslim (tenth century).

In one of the more comical pages of history, some of the specifically Muslim shrines have been re-dedicated on the authority of a rabbi's dream or "revelation," whereby the rabbi has proclaimed that the "true" holy figure buried within the Muslim shrine is a Jewish patriarch or matriarch, thereby "reclaiming" a Jewish identity for the shrine and the land around it (Benvenisti 275–76, 278). One such example is the Muslim shrine of Sitt Sakina. This woman was believed to have been a relative of the prophet Muhammad. She lived in the city of Medina and died in about 745 CE. Miraculously her grave migrated to Tiberias, and Muslims made pilgrimages there to honor her, until 1948 when Israel conquered the town. The tomb stood deserted until 1995, when one day a rabbi decided that it must be the tomb of Rachel, the wife of Rabbi Akiba. He announced the "revelation" after an English tourist had experienced a supposed miracle at the site. No matter that there was no basis in tradition; the tomb became a major Jewish pilgrimage site to which numerous people flock seeking cures. The extensive renovations done at the site have severely damaged a Muslim cemetery (Benvenisti 280–81).

Another method of obliterating Muslims shrines has been to change the local Arabic village or place names and give those spots a Hebrew, preferably biblical name. In Palestine the Arabs had preserved many names that could have served as a means for identifying archeological remains. But, for instance, in the Negev, the Israeli Committee for the Designation of Place Names eradicated those place names because of political pressure and "patriotism" (Benvenisti 16–17). Making the place names Jewish brought about a pseudo-biblical landscape. Sites were illogically connected with certain biblical events or figures. Over fifty names of people from the Bible were superimposed on sites in an effort to form a connection with Jewish forefathers and kings of Israel. These figures had no connection to those particular sites, but the Arab names, which might have provided some linguistic evidence for the site's pre-historic usage, were erased because of "political exigencies" (Benvenisti 22). The victorious State of Israel arrogated to itself the sites that had been sacred to their vanquished enemy. At the most important of those sites, Hebron, the outcome has been tragic. What had been, according to all the texts we have presented, the most

hospitable shrine of the land became a place of violence when a deranged Israeli doctor murdered twenty-nine Muslims at prayer. Though like Rachel's Tomb, the Hebron site is in the West Bank, as of February 2010, it was declared an exclusive "Jewish Heritage Site" by the Netanyahu government.

The "rediscovering" and renaming of "ancient tombs" has been part of an effort to bolster the political case for a historically continuous connection between the ancient Jewish kingdom (which lasted for six hundred years in the area of the Judean hills) and the new state built on what the Romans called Palestine, and medieval Arab texts call Filistin. In the past sixty years, many of the sites sacred to Muslims have been destroyed or given a new meaning under a superimposed name, depriving a deeply rooted people of access to a sacred history that went back hundreds of years—a history that reflected, no doubt, ancient Israelite, Canaanite, and earlier Neolithic practices. The land could have revealed many layers. Instead, it has been redefined to valorize just one stratum when multiple strata could have revealed so much richness. It could have offered an even deeper understanding of the various patterns of joint veneration. A narrow exclusivity now dominates, one that reflects, tragically, only one portion of a multi-layered history. Indeed, Rachel must be weeping and moaning for her children.

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