

The Objects That Remain

Laura Levitt

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“A difficult, painful, and compelling book in which Levitt weaves a complex analysis of the materiality and meaningfulness of what remains of the quotidian (objects, clothing, detritus) as testimony and witness to trauma.”

—Elizabeth Castelli, author of *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*

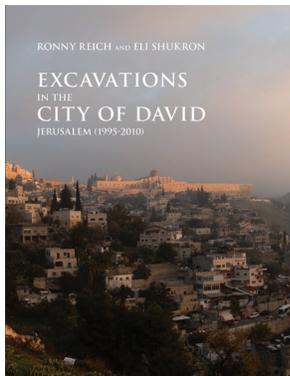
On a November evening in 1989, Laura Levitt was raped in her own bed. Her landlord heard the assault taking place and called 911, but the police arrived too late to apprehend Laura’s attacker. When they left, investigators took items with them—a pair of sweatpants, the bedclothes—and a rape exam was performed at the hospital. However, this evidence was never processed.

Decades later, Laura returns to these objects, viewing them not as clues that will lead to the identification of her assailant but rather as a means of engaging traumatic legacies writ large.

The Objects That Remain is equal parts personal memoir and fascinating examination of the ways in which the material remains of violent crimes inform our experience of, and thinking about, trauma and loss. Considering artifacts in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and evidence in police storage facilities across the country, Laura’s story moves between intimate trauma, the story of an unsolved rape, and genocide. Throughout, she asks what it might mean to do justice to these violent pasts outside the juridical system or through historical empiricism, which are the dominant ways in which we think about evidence from violent crimes and other highly traumatic events.

Over the course of her investigation, the author reveals how these objects that remain and the stories that surround them enable forms of intimacy. In this way, she models for us a different kind of reckoning, where justice is an animating process of telling and holding.

Laura Levitt is Professor of Religion, Jewish Studies, and Gender at Temple University. She is the author of *American Jewish Loss After the Holocaust* and *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home*.



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“To put things simply, there is no way to decipher the history of Ancient Israel without the archaeology of Jerusalem, with no access to the Temple Mount, there is no way to understand the archaeology and history of Jerusalem without the City of David ridge, and there is no way to study the City of David without the results of the Reich/Shukron excavations. This volume is therefore a landmark in the archaeology of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel.”

—Israel Finkelstein, Professor Emeritus, Tel Aviv University

The City of David, more specifically the southeastern hill of first- and second-millennium BCE Jerusalem, has long captivated the imagination of the world. Archaeologists and historians, biblical scholars and clergy, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and tourists and armchair travelers from every corner of the globe, to say nothing of politicians of all stripes, look to this small stretch of land in awe, amazement, and anticipation.

In the City of David, in the ridge leading down from the Temple Mount, hardly a stone has remained unturned. Archaeologists have worked at a dizzying pace digging and analyzing. But while preliminary articles abound, there is a grievous lack of final publications of the excavations—a regrettable limitation on the ability to fully integrate vital and critical results into the archaeological reconstruction of ancient Jerusalem.

Excavations of the City of David are conducted under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The Authority has now partnered with the Center for the Study of Ancient Jerusalem and its publication arm, the Ancient Jerusalem Publication Series, for the publication of reports that are written and designed for the scholar as well as for the general reader. *Excavations in the City of David* (APJ 1), is the first volume in this series.

Ronny Reich is Professor Emeritus of classical archaeology at the University of Haifa, former Codirector of the City of David Excavations (1995–2012), and Chair of the Israel Archaeological Council.

Eli Shukron is an archaeologist who worked with the Israel Antiquities Authority and excavated the City of David in Jerusalem.