

Is T1 David's Tomb?

A hundred years ago, Raymond Weill excavated this site in the City of David and believed it to be the Judahite kings' tombs. Was he right?

Jeffrey R. Zorn

"Then David slept with his ancestors,
and was buried in the City of David."

(1 Kings 2:10)

ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF KINGS, MOST OF DAVID'S immediate successors down through Ahaz were also buried in the City of David.*

The City of David, a 12-acre site, is well established as the earliest settlement of Jerusalem and the extent of the city in David's time down through the next 250 years. It is a relatively small ridge south of today's Temple Mount.

The city's location was determined by the Gihon Spring, Jerusalem's only source of fresh water. The Gihon Spring also marks the commencement of a remarkable 1,750-foot tunnel known as Hezekiah's Tunnel that carried (and still carries) the water of the spring to the other side of the city,

*Uzziah/Azariah was not buried in the City of David because of his skin condition, according to 2 Chronicles 26:23, but 2 Kings 15:7 says he was.

Christ and his work of salvation.

The parting of the ways between Jewish and gentile Christianity is manifest already at this stage, and the Epistle of Barnabas marks the start of the future doctrinal evolution of the church on exclusively gentile lines. Half a century after Barnabas, the bishop of Sardis, Melito, declared that the Jews are guilty of deicide: "God has been murdered ... by the right hand of Israel" (*Paschal Homily* 96). Jewish Christianity makes no sense any longer.

The Didache is the last flowering of Judeo-Christianity. After Hadrian suppressed the Second Jewish Revolt in 135 C.E., the decline of Jewish Christianity began. Justin Martyr (executed in 165 C.E.) proudly notes that in his day non-Jews largely outnumbered the Jewish members of the church (*First Apology*).

Thereafter, Judeo-Christianity, the elder sister, adhering to the observance of the Mosaic precepts and combining them with a primitive type of faith in Jesus, progressively became a fringe phenomenon. Judeo-Christians progressively vanished, either rejoining the Jewish fold or being absorbed in the gentile church. ■

This article is adapted from Geza Vermes's article "Jews, Christians and Judaeo-Christians" that appeared in the December 2011 issue of Standpoint, a political/cultural magazine published in London. Our thanks to editor Daniel Johnson.—Ed.

David's Tomb?

continued from page 52

The archaeological remains from Ebla, Ugarit, Byblos and Hazor thus show that royal/elite tombs of the Bronze Age into the early part of the Iron Age need not be extravagant or contain the elaborate architectural embellishments of late Iron Age Judahite tombs. On the contrary, in many respects they resemble Weill's tombs. Without their contents and architectural contexts, none of these other tombs would be judged to be elite/

royal tombs if compared to the fine late Judahite tombs that are customarily used to discredit T1 and T2 as tombs.⁶ Weill's tombs lack any trace of their original contents or their above-ground architectural context. All we have is their form, and that matches well with other tombs of David's era and earlier.

I conclude that Weill's T1 and T2 are very probably the remains of the tombs of the Davidic dynasty.

One final point: Why was David buried within the walls of Jerusalem? After all, Israelite laws concerning ritual purification dictated that anyone who touched a corpse, or even a grave, became ritually impure until the proper ceremony was undertaken (Numbers 19). One possibility is that David and his successors were worried about the plundering of their tombs and the desecration of their remains. Such a concern is well founded, as attested in Amos 2:1, where God promises to punish the Moabites for burning to lime the bones of the kings of Edom. Being buried inside the city added a layer of security, whether or not the burial site violated (later) Israelite law. Another possibility ties in with David's decision to make the Canaanite city of Jerusalem his capital. As a Bethlehemite, David was no doubt well acquainted with the trappings of power found in this nearby royal center. Since the area under his control included a mixed Israelite-Canaanite population, he chose Jerusalem, at least in part, as a center of authority that would symbolize his power in a way recognizable to his non-Israelite subjects. Being buried in Jerusalem in a tomb similar to those used by other Bronze Age elites, not his family tomb in Bethlehem, was another way to symbolize his royal status among his Canaanite subjects.⁷ In any event, the Bible is clear in placing the royal necropolis within the City of David.⁸ ■

¹ Ronny Reich, *The City of David: Revisiting Early Excavations* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2004), pp. 7, 13.

² The American Frederick J. Bliss, working for the British almost 20 years before Weill's work, was actually the first archaeologist to attempt to locate and excavate the Davidic tombs in accordance with Clermont-Ganneau's ideas. Bliss, however, due to a misunderstanding excavated south of the great wall and closer to the Siloam Pool. F.J. Bliss, "Fourteenth Report on the Excavations at Jerusalem," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* 1897: 180, 264.

³ Reich, *The City of David*, pp. 66–67.

⁴ At the time of Weill's excavation, Weill found a masonry wall, 1 foot high, on the front edge of the depression and a second masonry wall (which Weill calls a "bench"), 1 foot high, on the back edge of the depression. These walls, it appears from Weill's description on page 68 (of the English translation), stretched the entire width of the cave, abutting the walls of the cave at a right angle. Thus, the cut depression, together with the two masonry walls, and the walls of the cave itself perpendicular to the masonry, all created a sort of "basin" 2 feet deep. This basin was found covered with a "blackish coating." Weill suggested two stages to this find: (1) the depression itself, 1 foot deep; and (2) the masonry and the black coating. Weill identified the first stage as a sarcophagus, dating to the Iron Age. He identified the second stage as a 2-foot-deep bathing basin including the two masonry walls. He tentatively dated this second stage to the Second Temple period. Nothing remains of the masonry or of the black coating. All that can be seen today is the cut depression, i.e., Weill's first stage. I thank Yonatan Adler for his assistance in parsing Weill's description.

⁵ Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.4.1.

⁶ David Ussishkin, a leading authority on First Temple tombs in Jerusalem (David Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan: The Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom* [Jerusalem, 1993]) has also concluded that Weill's T1 and T2 are most likely tombs. Strangely, however, he refuses to take the next step—that they are likely the Davidic tombs referred to in the Bible: "In my view these caves may well have been tombs ruined by the later quarries, but I doubt if they were royal tombs." (David Ussishkin, *On Biblical Jerusalem, Megiddo, Jezreel and Lachish* [Hong Kong, 2011], p. 31) As we have seen, the major objection to the conclusion that T1 and T2 are the royal necropolis is that T1 and T2 are not tombs. But if they are tombs, almost all the objections to the conclusion that they are the royal necropolis fade. What else could they be? The entire City of David is but 12 acres. The Bible itself indicates that this area is just where the royal necropolis was located. So if they are tombs, as Ussishkin recognizes, they should be the royal necropolis.

⁷ Marrying a foreign princess (2 Samuel 3:3), employing foreign mercenaries (2 Samuel 8:18, 15:18–22), securing the help of the Canaanite/Phoenician Hiram of Tyre to assist in the construction of a palace (2 Samuel 5:11–12), the use of corvée labor (2 Samuel 20:24), the prominence given his Jerusalem-born son Solomon, the turning over of members of Saul's family for execution to the non-Israelite Gibeonites (2 Samuel 21:1–9), are additional marks that David intended to portray himself as a legitimate Canaanite-style ruler.

⁸ An earlier scholarly treatment of this topic may be found in Jeffrey R. Zorn, "The Burials of the Judean Kings: Sociohistorical Considerations and Suggestions" in A.M. Maier and P. Miroschedji, eds., "I Will Speak the Riddle of Ancient Times": *Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), pp. 801–820.



**biblicalarchaeology.org/
jerusalemplans**

Take a closer look at Weill's excavation, including photos, plans and drawings not printed here.

PREVIOUS PAGES: "David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David" (1 Kings 2:10). The Hebrew Bible makes it clear that King David and his successors were buried somewhere on the narrow ridge near the Gihon Spring where the earliest city of Jerusalem was located. But where exactly? The leader of an early-20th-century excavation believed he had discovered the royal necropolis of the Davidic kings in the southern part of the City of David, overlooking the Kidron Valley (the photo looks out from inside the largest of these "tombs"), but many have challenged the identification. Could this have been King David's burial place?

where it emptied into the Siloam Pool. How the two teams of tunnelers, working from either end, managed to meet is still somewhat of a mystery. An even greater mystery is the winding course of the tunnel. If it had been cut in a straight line from the spring to the pool, it would have been two-thirds as long (and cost only two-thirds as much and taken only two-thirds as much time to dig.)

One of the mysteries in this connection is the strange semicircular loop in the southern half of

the tunnel. Why did the tunnelers make this seemingly unnecessary loop? In 1887 the famous French diplomat, Jerusalem savant and explorer Charles Clermont-Ganneau suggested that this loop was an effort by the tunnelers to avoid an inadvertent disturbance of the burial grounds of the Davidic kings above the tunnel.¹

In making this suggestion, Clermont-Ganneau relied not only on the general Biblical descriptions placing a royal necropolis in the City of David but also more specific references in the Book of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah returned from the Babylonian Exile in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., he rebuilt (or repaired) the walls of Jerusalem with various teams of workers. It is possible from the text to follow roughly the progress of this rebuilding of the wall. At one point, a team is assigned to repair the "Fountain Gate" or "Spring Gate" (Nehemiah 3:15). This is presumably the gate by the Gihon Spring. This team also rebuilt the wall located near the "pool of the King's garden," which is south of the Gihon Spring and adjacent to the recently discovered Pool of Siloam.* The assignment of the next team then gives the key location: They repaired the wall "from opposite [or beside] the graves [or tombs] of David as far as the artificial pool" (Nehemiah 3:16). From the context of this passage, it is clear that the royal necropolis was located at the southern end of the city, possibly within the southern loop of Hezekiah's Tunnel.

To test Clermont-Ganneau's hypothesis, an archaeological excavation of the area was mounted in the early 20th century, funded by Baron Edmond de Rothschild and directed by the renowned French Egyptologist Raymond Weill.²

Whether or not Weill found the royal necropolis of the kings of Judah, the results of his excavation were quite remarkable. He defined eight sites of rock cuttings as tombs. (Weill found a ninth farther south, separate from the others, in a subsequent excavation in the 1920s; unlike the others, it is clearly a tomb. It is a cave with a rectangular entrance carved into the side of a cliff with a magnificent view overlooking the Kidron Valley.)

The only tombs Weill described with any specificity (indeed, described at all) in his published reports are those he labeled T1 and T2 (as well as T3). They are clearly the most prominent, as well as the most interesting of his "tombs."

Are T1 and T2 part of the royal necropolis, perhaps one of them the tomb of King David himself? Let us take a closer look.

But before we do, a preliminary observation: As

*See Hershel Shanks, "The Siloam Pool—Where Jesus Cured the Blind Man," *BAR*, September/October 2005.



PALESTINE EXCAVATION FUND

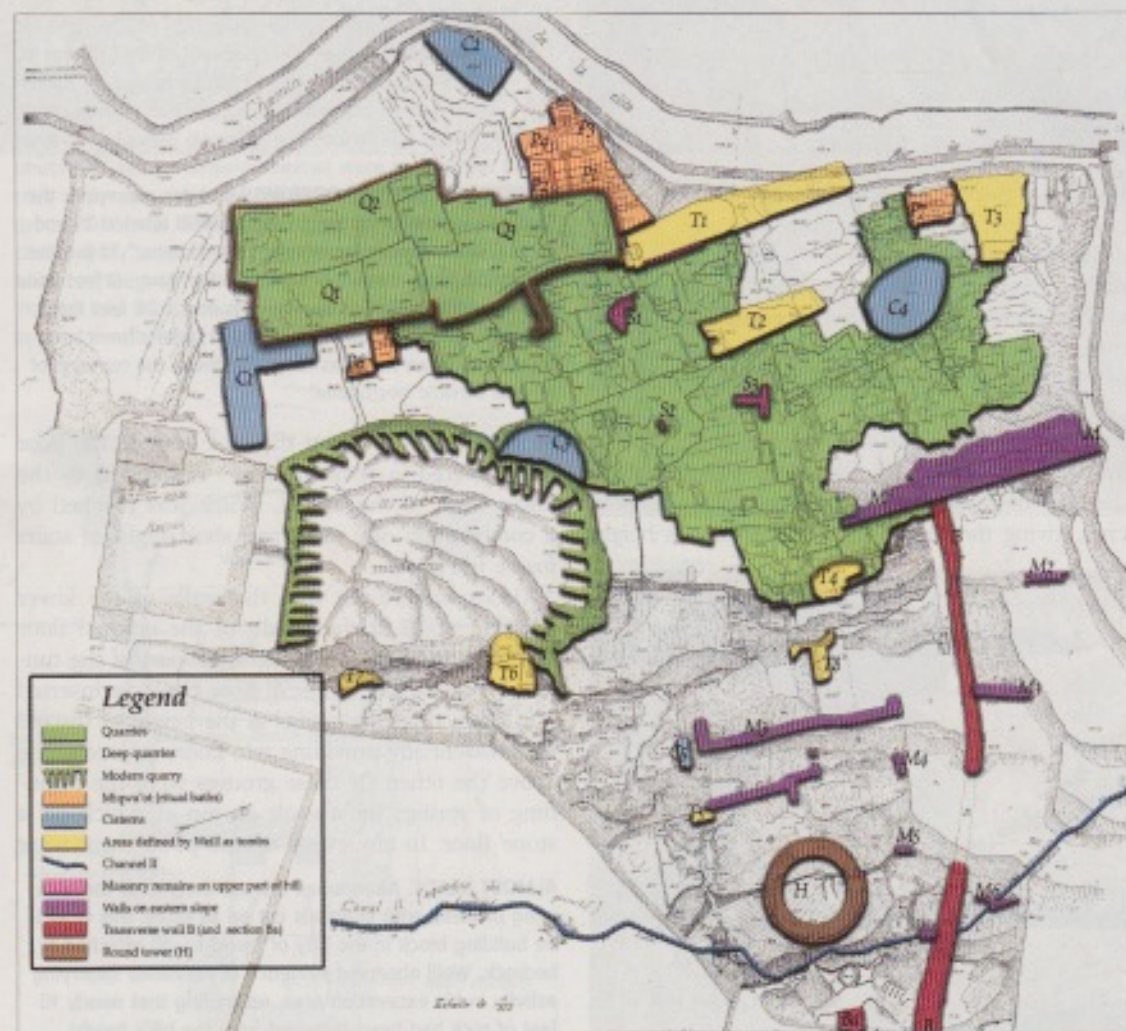
GUIDED BY WINDING WATERS.

The circuitous path of Hezekiah's Tunnel—a 1,750-foot rock-hewn water tunnel that leads from the Gihon Spring, under the City of David, to the Siloam Pool on the southwest side—has long baffled experts, particularly a semicircular "loop" near the southern end. Why did the team of tunnelers starting from the southern end and going northeast from the pool swerve southeast to form a large arc before then turning north again to meet the other team that started from the spring? In the late 19th century, famous French diplomat and explorer Charles Clermont-Ganneau (above, left) suggested that the tunnelers dug this loop to avoid disturbing the burial grounds of the Davidic kings, which the Bible clearly locates at the southern end of the city.

Within a couple of decades, Baron Edmond de Rothschild had purchased land in this area of the City of David so that excavations could test this hypothesis.



A MAN WITH A PLAN. In 1913–1914 and 1923–1924, renowned Egyptologist Raymond Weill (below) directed excavations above the southern loop of Hezekiah's Tunnel on Baron Rothschild's property in the southern part of the City of David to test Clermont-Ganneau's hypothesis. On the color-coded plan of Weill's original (right), Hezekiah's Tunnel is marked in blue and Weill's 1913–1914 excavation area is outlined in green.



WHAT HE FOUND. Despite later quarrying (shaded in green at left), Weill discovered ancient walls ("M" in purple [mur is French for "wall"] and "B" in red), ritual pools ("P" in orange), cisterns ("C" in blue) and a circular tower ("H" in brown) now believed to be a columbarium. The most remarkable finds, however, were nine rock-cut features that Weill identified as "tombs" (T1–T8 are in yellow on this plan; T9 was farther south). He identified the three most prominent tombs (T1–T3)—the only ones he described in his report—as part of the royal necropolis of the kings of Judah.



RICHARD T. NOBLE

indicate that the form of the tunnel was altered in the Second Temple period. But even if T1 and T2 were used as cisterns in the Second Temple period, this does not detract from the argument that they were originally used as tombs in the First Temple period. Indeed, Weill himself suggested that his "tombs" may have been reused as part of the construction of the famous synagogue of Theodosius that was built somewhere in this area. (Weill found an inscription from the synagogue nearby.) Some of the First Temple period tombs across the valley from the City of David are now similarly used for another purpose—as the basements and rooms of homes of Silwan villagers.*

The main argument against the identification of Weill's "tombs" as the royal necropolis, however, is that they look nothing like the imposing Jerusalem tombs we know of from the First Temple period: in the hillside of Silwan across the Kidron Valley; at Ketef Hinnom west of the City of David; or on the grounds of the École Biblique north of the Old City. These tombs variously feature bone repositories, gabled ceilings, "Hathor"-style headrests, and walls and doors cut with frames, recesses, cornices and other architectural embellishments. There is not a hint of any of these features in Weill's "tombs." "How," the argument runs, "could the nobility of

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY. Crusaders (erroneously) placed this cenotaph draped in velvet on the hill now known as Mt. Zion to mark the traditional tomb of King David. Even the famous Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century C.E., thought that David had been buried on the southwestern hill of Jerusalem, which he mistakenly identified as Mt. Zion. Biblical references in the Book of Kings and Book of Nehemiah, however, record the earlier tradition that David and his successors were buried in the City of David on the ridge to the east.

Judah and Jerusalem be buried in such fine tombs while the kingdom's rulers were relegated to these crude tunnels?"

But these elaborate First Temple tombs to which Weill's "tombs" are often compared are 200 years later than Weill's "tombs." Why should we expect tenth- and ninth-century B.C.E. tombs to look like tombs from the latter part of the eighth century and later? Instead of looking for comparisons at the end of the Iron Age, when the Kingdom of Judah had reached its full maturity, we should more sensibly look for parallels with elite/royal burials from the beginning of the Iron Age (12th century B.C.E.) and the end of the preceding Bronze Age.

The most striking feature of these earlier royal and elite tombs is their relative simplicity. These tombs, in fact, are so simple that they would not likely have been recognized as royal tombs, save for their contents and architectural contexts. For

*See Hershel Shanks, "The Tombs of Silwan," *BAR*, May/June 1994.

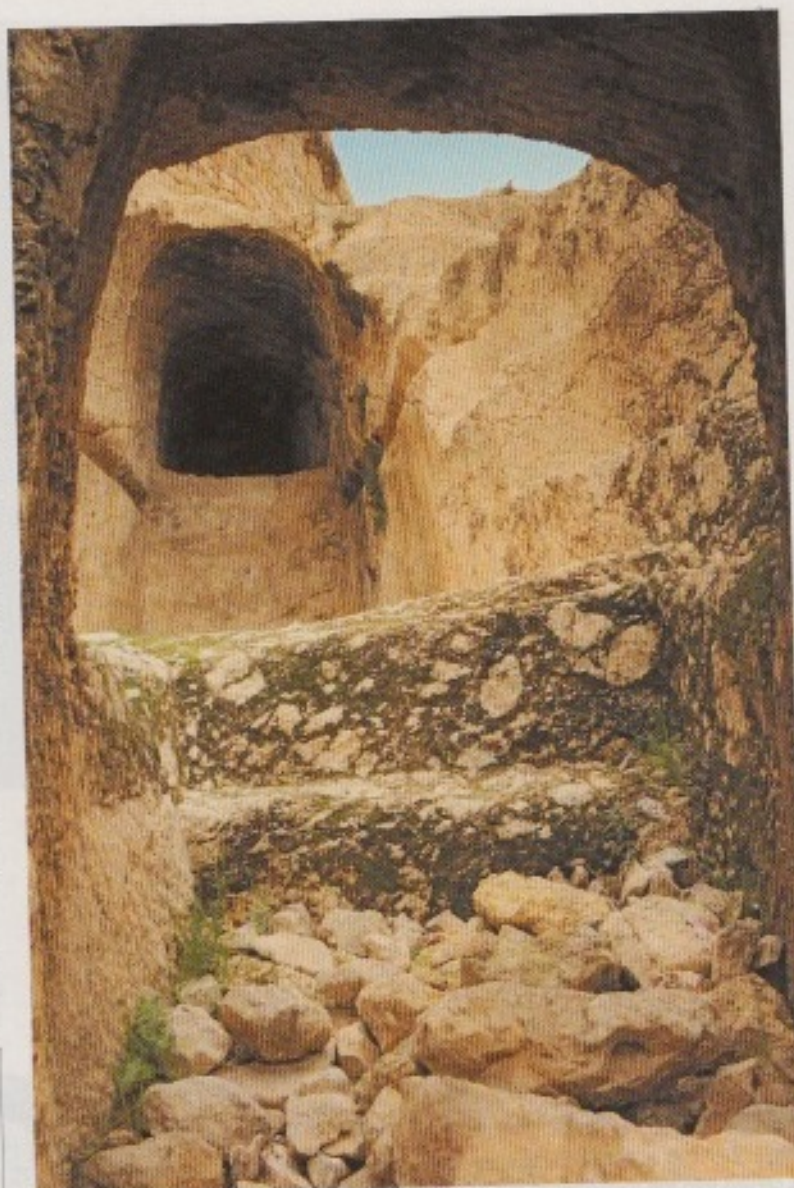
two levels to the tunnel—the new lower floor in front and the original floor in back.

At the back of the upper tunnel, a rectangular depression was cut about a foot deep.⁴ This depression is 6 feet long and almost 4 feet wide. If this cutting is original, and not one of the later modifications to the chamber, the obvious speculation is that it was meant for a human body or perhaps a sarcophagus.

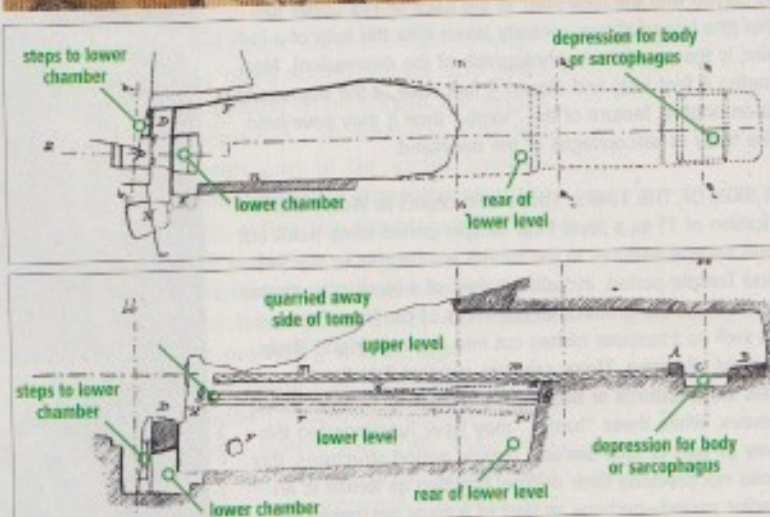
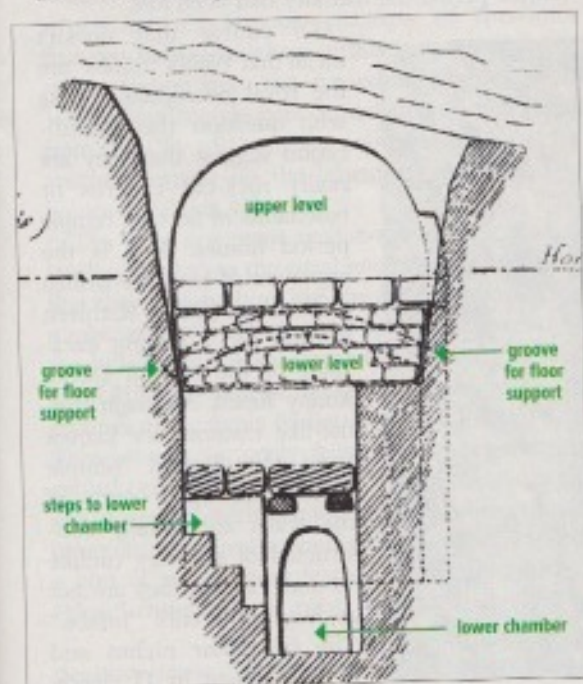
Unfortunately, Weill does not describe T2 in the same detail as he did T1. His text does not even give the dimensions of T2, although his plan gives it a length of almost 28 feet. Quarrying marks at the front of the tunnel and indications on Weill's plan suggest a much longer original form, perhaps as much as 100 feet. The width of T2 is 7 feet, according to the plan.

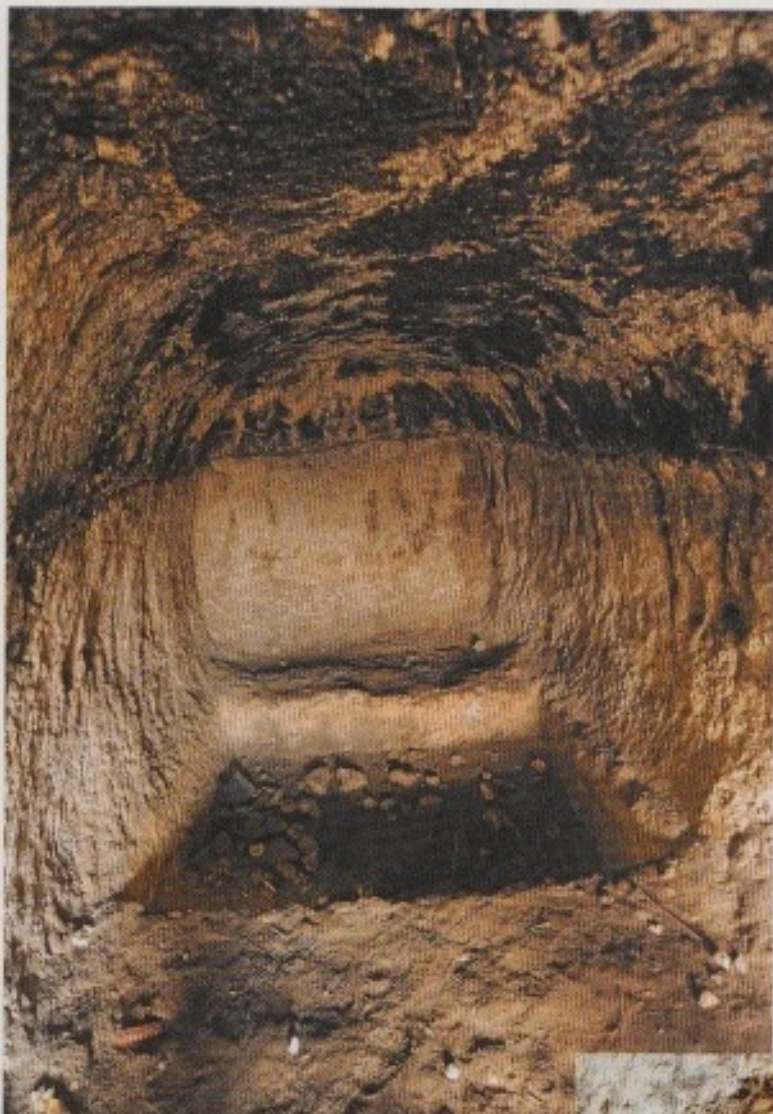
T3, about 12 feet behind T1, is even less adequately described. Weill identified these three tombs as the remains of the royal necropolis of King David. The other rock cuttings that are

MAKING ROOM FOR MORE KINGS? The floor of the front 32 feet of T1 was lowered in antiquity by 6 additional feet to an overall height of 12 feet, as shown in the photo at right and the section drawing below. At the same time, a new doorway and stairs (also shown in the photo and section drawing below) were carved into the rock to provide access to the lower level. Long horizontal grooves on both sides of the tunnel (at upper left in the photo) likely supported a new floor constructed at the height of the original tunnel floor—effectively dividing the "tomb" into two floors or levels (also shown on the plan and section drawing below, right).



HISTORICAL ARTS





GARY HALBERSTEIN

FINAL RESTING PLACE? A rectangular depression or basin is carved into the rock floor at the back of T1's upper tunnel (the image above, recently taken with the help of a ladder, is the only known photograph of the depression). Measuring 6 feet long and almost 4 feet wide, if the depression is an original feature of the "tomb," then it may have held the body or sarcophagus of the deceased.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES. Those who object to Weill's identification of T1 as a royal First Temple period tomb point out that several features in the tunnel are datable to the Second Temple period, including traces of a black-gray mortar found near the grooves on the walls of the lower level, as well as triangular niches cut into the wall (right) likely to hold oil lamps. These scholars suggest that the tunnels were cisterns or basements of Second Temple period homes. While these "tombs" may have functioned in this way as part of later Second Temple period structures, this does not preclude their original function as tombs in an earlier period—perhaps as part of a royal necropolis.



HERSHEL SHARPS

supposedly tombs are simply located on his plan.

His identification has not been widely accepted.

One objection is that in the late Second Temple period (the period just before the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.), much work was performed in T1. For example, in the lower tunnel of T1, traces of a black-gray mortar-cement were found in the vicinity of the grooves on the side walls and are datable to the Second Temple period. Similarly with the triangular niches cut into the wall likely to hold oil lamps—also from the Second Temple period.

The short answer to these objections is of course that T1 was obviously altered, probably more than once. These modifications from the Second Temple period are simply evidence of a later renovation of the structure. Nearby T2 preserves more of the original appearance of both chambers.

Indeed, by the end of the Second Temple period, the memory of this area of the City of David as the Davidic necropolis had faded and disappeared. We know this because the historian Josephus, writing in the first century C.E., refers to Mt. Zion as located on the hill west of what we now know as the City of David.⁵ It was here on Mt. Zion, Josephus tells us, where David was buried. Indeed, the western hill is still (erroneously) called Mt. Zion, and the traditional Jewish site of David's tomb is (again erroneously) located on this hill. In Nehemiah's time, as we have seen, the Biblical writer still knew where the royal necropolis was located in the City of David, but apparently by the late Second Temple period the memory had been lost.

Of course that doesn't mean that Weill's "tombs" are the royal necropolis. Those who question the identification suggest that they are really rock-cut cisterns or basements of Second Temple period homes. This is the argument of both the British archaeologist Dame Kathleen Kenyon and a current excavator of the City of David, Ronny Reich. Although tunnel-like cisterns are known from the Second Temple period, the upper parts of the walls are usually constructed of masonry (unlike T1 and T2) and they are not as long as Weill's "tombs." The triangular niches and mortar-cement in T1 clearly



ZURBON / I. MORIN

indicate that the form of the tunnel was altered in the Second Temple period. But even if T1 and T2 were used as cisterns in the Second Temple period, this does not detract from the argument that they were originally used as tombs in the First Temple period. Indeed, Weill himself suggested that his "tombs" may have been reused as part of the construction of the famous synagogue of Theodotos that was built somewhere in this area. (Weill found an inscription from the synagogue nearby.) Some of the First Temple period tombs across the valley from the City of David are now similarly used for another purpose—as the basements and rooms of homes of Silwan villagers.*

The main argument against the identification of Weill's "tombs" as the royal necropolis, however, is that they look nothing like the imposing Jerusalem tombs we know of from the First Temple period: in the hillside of Silwan across the Kidron Valley; at Ketef Hinnom west of the City of David; or on the grounds of the École Biblique north of the Old City. These tombs variously feature bone repositories, gabled ceilings, "Hathor"-style headrests, and walls and doors cut with frames, recesses, cornices and other architectural embellishments. There is not a hint of any of these features in Weill's "tombs." "How," the argument runs, "could the nobility of

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY. Crusaders (erroneously) placed this cenotaph draped in velvet on the hill now known as Mt. Zion to mark the traditional tomb of King David. Even the famous Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century C.E., thought that David had been buried on the southwestern hill of Jerusalem, which he mistakenly identified as Mt. Zion. Biblical references in the Book of Kings and Book of Nehemiah, however, record the earlier tradition that David and his successors were buried in the City of David on the ridge to the east.

Judah and Jerusalem be buried in such fine tombs while the kingdom's rulers were relegated to these crude tunnels?"

But these elaborate First Temple tombs to which Weill's "tombs" are often compared are 200 years later than Weill's "tombs." Why should we expect tenth- and ninth-century B.C.E. tombs to look like tombs from the latter part of the eighth century and later? Instead of looking for comparisons at the end of the Iron Age, when the Kingdom of Judah had reached its full maturity, we should more sensibly look for parallels with elite/royal burials from the beginning of the Iron Age (12th century B.C.E.) and the end of the preceding Bronze Age.

The most striking feature of these earlier royal and elite tombs is their relative simplicity. These tombs, in fact, are so simple that they would not likely have been recognized as royal tombs, save for their contents and architectural contexts. For

*See Hershel Shanks, "The Tombs of Silwan," *BAR*, May/June 1994.



Weill recognized, the area he excavated had been heavily quarried at some time after the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. This in itself makes it very difficult to determine what was here at the time of David and his successors. Weill estimated that the quarrying took as much as 10 feet of stone off the top of the hill.

T1, the most imposing of the "tombs," is essentially a tunnel cut into the bedrock, about 54 feet long, 8 feet wide and 6 feet high. At some point, the floor of the front 32 feet of the tunnel was lowered, giving the tunnel in the front area a height

HACKED INTO GAPING OPENINGS by later quarrying, the fascinating parallel rock-cut tunnels Weill labeled T1 and T2 are still the most imposing of the "tombs." T1 (on the left in the photo above) is about 54 feet long, 8 feet wide and 6 feet high. T2 (on the right) is about 28 feet long, although evidence suggests it may originally have been more than three times as long. Are these the remains of a royal Davidic necropolis?

of more than 12 feet. At the same time as the floor was lowered, a rock-cut door was added to the lower front of the tunnel, which was reached by a combination of a shaft and short flight of stairs inside the door.³

Grooves were cut into the walls of the lower addition of T1 at the height of the original floor before it was lowered in the front part of the tunnel. It was as if an artificial floor could be inserted into the wall of the tunnel at the height of the old floor, essentially providing two floors or levels, one above the other. Or these grooves were the beginning of springs for a vault on top of which sat a stone floor. In any event, at one point there were

ALMOST READY. Abandoned toward the end of the quarrying process, with channels cut on all sides, this would-be building block in the City of David is still attached to bedrock. Weill observed evidence of pervasive quarrying activity in his excavation area, estimating that nearly 10 feet of rock had been removed from the hill's height.



HERSHEL SHANKS



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



A.D. BIDDLE/RETNA/GETTY IMAGES

example, at Ebla in Syria, two royal tombs were found below a Middle Bronze II palace dated to about 1800 B.C.E. The chambers lack symmetry and sophistication. Only their contents and location below the palace signify their royal status.

Similarly, at Late Bronze Age Ugarit (on the Mediterranean coast of Syria), the tomb found below the royal palace was built along the same lines as other tombs: a single ashlar-built burial chamber with a corbel roof and stepped *dromos*, or entryway. Again, only its place below the palace signified its status.

Another example relates to the well-known sarcophagus of Ahiiram, the king of Byblos, who may

RECLINING LIONS support the four corners of the 11th-century B.C.E. stone sarcophagus of King Ahiiram of Byblos (left), now in the Beirut Museum. Reliefs on the side panels depict a funerary banquet in which attendants stack cups and dishes on the offering table before the king who sits at left, enthroned on sphinxes. An inscription on the upper rim and lid of the coffin (below, left)—the earliest known substantial Phoenician inscription—identifies the deceased king. Despite the elaborately decorated sarcophagus, the tomb itself was small and roughly carved. Some who reject the identification of Weill's tombs as a royal necropolis point out that much more elaborate tombs later in the First Temple period are known in Jerusalem. The simplicity of King Ahiiram's and other contemporaneous royal tombs in the Near East, however, parallel the plain features of the early Iron Age tombs in the City of David. The more elegant Jerusalem tombs, on the other hand, were carved hundreds of years later, when Judah was a more established, prosperous kingdom.

have been a contemporary of David. His tomb was an irregularly shaped, roughly cut chamber entered from an adjoining shaft. The main chamber was about 26 feet long and a bit more than 13 feet wide. Into this relatively small space, three stone sarcophagi were placed, each about 8 feet long and about half that in width. Only Ahiiram's sarcophagus was decorated and inscribed. Again, it is the artifacts from the tomb (some bearing the name of Pharaoh Ramesses II), the iconography and inscription on the Ahiiram sarcophagus, and the tomb's location in the royal cemetery that indicate this is a royal tomb. The tomb itself would hardly suggest its royal status.

Two final examples come from closer to home—Bronze Age Hazor. Yigael Yadin's excavations in the lower city at Hazor revealed two tomb complexes with similarities to Weill's Jerusalem tombs. (I no longer need to place quotation marks around Weill's tombs; I believe they are tombs.) The first is a chamber about 25 by 20 feet and 25 feet deep from Middle Bronze IIB (1750–1550 B.C.E.) that lay below a monumental building. Three tunnel-like chambers open off the main chamber. The excavation report describes them as “large caverns.” Yadin suggested that these were tombs of nobility.

The second example from Hazor is an even more striking parallel to T1 and T2. It, too, is a tunnel. It dates to about 1350 B.C.E. (Late Bronze II) and was found near a monumental, clearly elite structure. Designated “Burial Cave 8144,” it was entered through a shaft 3 feet wide and 3 feet deep. At the base of the shaft was a set of four stairs. The tunnel itself was 17 feet long and 9 feet wide. At the far end of the tunnel were piles of human remains, unfortunately in poor condition.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 78