

# *The Burials of the Judean Kings: Sociohistorical Considerations and Suggestions*

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## *Introduction*

Unlike the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs, which are well-known objects of study and visitation, the burial grounds of the kings of Judah remain disputed even in regard to their general location. According to the accounts in the book of Kings, from the time of David (1 Kgs 2:10) and Solomon (1 Kgs 11:43) through Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:20), the Davidic kings were buried in royal tombs in the City of David (Yeivin 1948; Bloch-Smith 1992: 116–18; Hachmann 1996: 228–38). After Ahaz, a variety of burial locations are recorded. Josiah, for example, was buried in “his own tomb” (2 Kgs 23:20a). The burial locations of most of the remaining post-Josianic kings are not given. While the Chronicler’s account often differs from Kings, in both accounts virtually all of the pre-Hezekiah kings were buried within the City of David. According to Neh 3:16, the royal necropolis was in the southern part of the city. While the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC left the city in ruins and resulted in the deportation of elite members of society, craftsmen, and soldiers, the bulk of the population that survived the war would have remained to eke out an existence (2 Kgs 24:14–16). Given this continuity of occupation, there seems little reason to suspect that the location of the royal necropolis would have been forgotten so quickly.

Various rock cuttings, tombs, and general areas have been proposed as the location of the Davidic necropolis, but nothing like a real consensus has been achieved. The most recent discussions have often focused on comparing the proposed locations with the various fine 8th-century BC and later tombs located on the periphery of Jerusalem. This approach may be mistaken. In fact, new light may be shed on both the specific location of the necropolis of the early Davidic kings and the general character of the burial of Manasseh and his successor, Amon, by looking at specifically cross-cultural parallels in non-Israelite burial practices.

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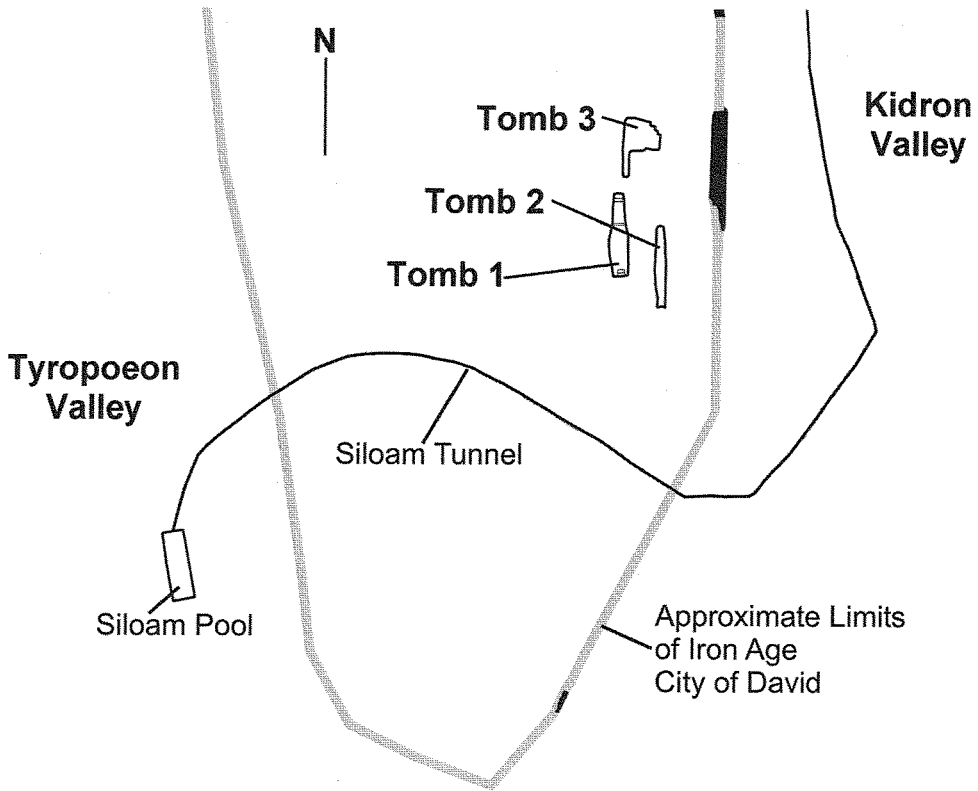


Fig. 1. Southern part of the City of David showing Weill's Tombs 1-3 (after Weill 1947: Pl. 1).

### *The Tombs of the Davidic Kings*

#### *In Search of the Davidic Necropolis*

Despite the reference in Neh 3:16 to the location of the burial grounds of the Davidic kings in the southern part of the City of David, there is no general consensus on precisely where they should be located. Some have even placed them, rather implausibly, in the Silwan cemetery (Reifenberg 1948) or north of the Old City among the tombs found in the St. Étienne Monastery (Barkay and Kloner 1986: 129).

In his 1913-14 excavations, Weill set out to determine whether the royal burial grounds were located within the great southern bend of Hezekiah's Tunnel, which might then explain its meandering course. In the course of his early excavations in the southern part of the City of David, Weill uncovered a series of 8 rock-cut "features" that he believed to be tombs dated to various periods (1920: 127-39, 157-73, Pls. 3, 5, 8A, 11-14, 17-19). He believed Tombs 4-7 to be Canaanite and Tomb 8 to be Judean (1920: 130-39). A 9th tomb was uncovered in his subsequent campaign (Weill 1947: Pl. 1). The published plans, sections, descriptions, and photographs of 6 of these features are very rough, where they

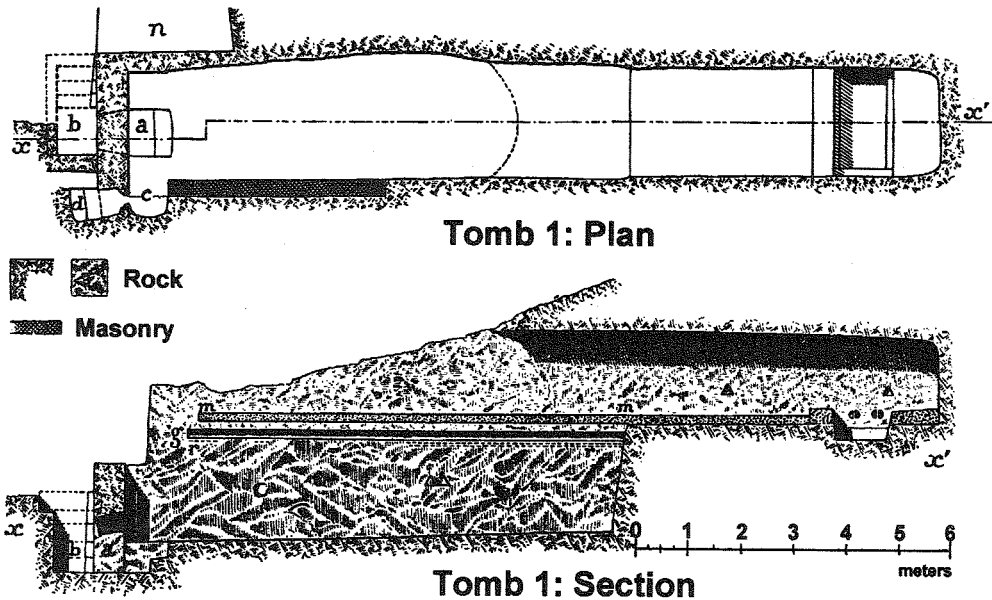


Fig. 2. Weill's Tomb 1, plan and section (after Vincent 1954: Fig. 82).

exist at all. In any event, the "features" are small chambers located outside the line of the early Iron Age city wall, albeit inside the lower 8th-century wall recently uncovered by Reich and Shukron (Shanks 1999: 27) and should not enter into a discussion of the location of the Davidic tombs. Weill's Tombs 1–3 are much larger features located farther up the slope and inside the city wall, running roughly parallel with the course of the wall (Figs. 1, 3). He championed these chambers as the fragmentary remains of the royal necropolis (Weill 1947: 117). Tomb 1 is the most elaborate of the chambers (although it was modified considerably over time) and the only one described, drawn, and photographed in any detail (Fig. 2). Originally it was ca. 16 m long (running almost north to south), ca. 2 m wide, and ca. 1.8 m high. At almost the rear of the chamber was a shallow rectangular depression ca. 1.2 m wide by 1.8 m long, which could have held a body or perhaps a sarcophagus. The rear part of the chamber also had niches in which lamps could have been placed. Broad, flat chisel strokes were used in the stone-cutting. At a later, indeterminable date(s?), the front part of the tomb was greatly modified. This is clearly indicated by the finer chiseling associated with the alterations. The floor of the front two-thirds of the chamber was lowered, increasing the height to almost 4 m, and the width at the base increased to ca. 2.5 m. Two grooves were cut along the length of both walls just below the level of the original floor, suggesting that they served as supports for an artificial floor (Bahat 1990: upper fig. on p. 33). A series of four steps leading to an entrance to the new lower section and another two steps then leading up into the lower chamber were also added, as was a stepped side entrance to the lower chamber.



Fig. 3. View of Weill's Tombs 1 (L), 2 (R), and 3 (above) (Vincent 1954: Pl. 70.1).

The purpose of these modifications is unclear. If they date to the Iron Age, they may represent an effort to increase the size of the tomb to accommodate additional burials. If they are much later, they may be partly the result of an effort to turn the chamber into some sort of dwelling or perhaps even a shelter for the quarriers working in the area. Quarrying activities destroyed the original front and exterior layout of this tomb and the others in the area, making it impossible to determine their initial form.

Tomb 2, just to the east of Tomb 1 and at about the same elevation (Fig. 3), seems originally to have been about the same length and width as Tomb 1, although it suffered even more damage from later quarrying. Tomb 3 is farther up the slope to the north, just above Tomb 1 (Fig. 3). The chamber was ca. 5 × 7 m and contained several deep burial niches, possibly similar in concept to the Late Bronze Age–Iron I Tomb 1 at Dothan (Cooley and Pratico 1993: 374). The total length of Tomb 3, including the entranceway, seems to have been ca. 12 m, although this is difficult to establish because the area suffered even more damage than Tomb 2.

While some scholars accepted Weill's identification of these tunnel-like structures as royal tombs (Simons 1952: 220–21; Vincent 1954: 322), others have remained noncommittal (Stern 1979: 274, 276; Rahmani 1981: 232), and still others have rejected it. Kenyon, for example, rather arbitrarily dismissed the

possibility, suggesting that the tunnels were oddly shaped cisterns (1974: 156). Ussishkin, based on his study of the elegant, finely worked Silwan tombs, argued that Weill's simple, rough tombs could not possibly be the final resting place of the royal family (1993: 298–99). The fundamental issue for scholars following Ussishkin is whether the Judean kings would have elected to be buried in a cruder, rougher setting than those in which their officials were interred.

There is, however, evidence that supports Weill's identification of these features as tombs and the supposition that they should continue to receive serious consideration as the royal Judean necropolis of the 10th through 8th centuries BC. First, they fit the setting specified in Neh 3:16. Second, the comparison of these tunnels with 8th-century and later tombs is misleading and probably unwarranted. According to the account in 1 Kgs 2:10, the royal burials began with David himself, indicating that the cemetery was already in use in the 10th century BC. This is at least two centuries earlier than the fine Silwan tombs, the Ketef Hinnom tombs, and those in the monastery of St. Étienne. Should we necessarily expect the same level of expertise in stone cutting at this early date? Shanks has already suggested that we should not (1973: 106–8; 1995a: 40–42; 1995b: 65–67), a suggestion that Ussishkin dismissed as “unconvincing,” although without offering any explanation (1993: 299). But the real question is whether Weill's tombs fall into a tradition of tomb architecture that dates as *late* as the 10th century. Could they, in fact, be tombs cut in the much older Canaanite custom of the Bronze Age, a custom purposefully adopted by David and his successors?

### *The Davidic Necropolis: The Canaanite Connection*

In order to evaluate whether Weill's rock-cut features may be remains, at least in part, of the tombs of the Davidic dynasty, it is important to keep in mind two broad issues. The first is the historical and sociopolitical conditions that existed in Canaan and Israel ca. 1000 BC, when David emerged as the leader of a multi-ethnic political entity or kingdom. The second pertains to the material-cultural parallels to elite burials in Syria–Palestine in the Middle–Late Bronze Age and Iron I.

#### *Historical and Sociopolitical Conditions*

First, it is important to consider the origins of the people of Israel, for this is directly relevant to the form and nature of the kingdom established by David and the steps he took to solidify his rule over a diverse population, including the planning and location of his tomb. It has become increasingly clear over the past two decades that a large segment, perhaps the majority, of the population that came to call itself Israelite never experienced captivity in Egypt but instead derived from local groups already in Canaan at the end of the Late Bronze Age (Finkelstein 1988: 347–48). The material culture of the hundreds of small villages dotting the hill country during the Iron I period, which most scholars accept as evidence of the gradual emergence of the Israelites, both continues and is an evolution of Late Bronze Age traditions and is merely a more-limited form of the material culture of contemporary Iron I lowland cities (Fritz 1987: 96–97;

London 1989: 40–52; Dever 1995: 204–6). Early Israel was probably an amalgam of urbanites, peasant farmers, and pastoralists from both sides of the Jordan occupying and settling the largely vacant hill country of the Late Bronze Age, with the social glue that was gradually binding them together perhaps coming from some Yahweh-worshippers who had escaped out of Egypt (Fritz 1987: 98; Dever 1998: 231–32). In other words, the real difference between early Israelites and Canaanites was more social (and religious?) than ethnic. In essence, David might be thought of as a ± seventh-generation Canaanite, and the Israelites of Iron I/Iron IIA may not have seen much of a divide between themselves and their lowland cousins.

Assuming the largely Canaanite origins of the Israelites and accepting the complex social web existing in late Iron I Canaan/Israel, we are able to approach the question of the nature of David's kingship in a fresh light. First and foremost, his kingship was not static but evolved over the course of his reign. Initially he only ruled over Judahites south of Jerusalem in an enclave around Hebron (2 Sam 2:1–4; 1 Chr 11:1–3). Over time, this expanded to include Israelites farther to the north. Moreover, his dominion eventually extended over various non-Israelite entities, the most important of which was the city of Jerusalem.

Most classic treatments of the time of David note that the seizure of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6–9; 1 Chr 11:4–6) was a key element in unifying the Israelite tribes under his leadership (Noth 1960: 189–90; Bright 1981: 200). Jerusalem had blocked easy communication along the north–south road running along the spine of the Central Hill Country. By securing Jerusalem, David removed this block. Moreover, since Jerusalem was a previously unconquered city on the border between the northern and southern tribes, its use as his capital signified that David was not playing favorites among the tribes in his selection of a capital. However, while these issues may indeed have been important contributing factors in David's decision to seize Jerusalem, they are limited in failing to take into account David's concerns not just for his rule over the Israelites, but also for the Canaanite elements of the population that would increasingly come under his control. David faced the task of welding together a variety of ethnic and social groups. He had to appear a legitimate ruler not only to his Israelite but also to his Canaanite subjects, who controlled more material wealth and technical knowledge than the town and village farmers and herdsman who made up his natural Israelite constituency in the Hill Country. Surely David would have been keenly aware of the problems facing a leader ruling over different social and ethnic groups. David was an Israelite from Bethlehem, a village only 9 km south of the Jebusite stronghold in Jerusalem. No doubt Bethlehem was part of the territory of Jerusalem and was its tributary (Na'aman 1992: 286, map on p. 284; Bunimovitz 1995: 326, Fig. 6 on p. 328). Possibly David had even visited Jerusalem during his youth and, he certainly understood its significance as a royal Canaanite center that carried on earlier traditions. If David wanted to appear a legitimate ruler to the Canaanites within his growing kingdom, he would have had to rule them from a Canaanite center with a royal pedigree stretching back into the Bronze Age and assume the trappings of Canaanite kingship.

Recognizing the dimorphic nature of David's rule is key to understanding certain aspects of his reign and that of his successor, Solomon. These often mirror Late Bronze Age practices and can be understood as efforts to legitimize a king's dynasty to his Canaanite subjects. First, during his period of flight from Saul, David acted like a true Bronze Age Hapiru, serving Achish of Gath as commander of a mercenary force that raided his enemies (1 Sam 27:1–12; cf. Amarna Letter 185: 9–64 in Moran 1992: 265). Once he became king, David seems to have maintained "Sea Peoples"/Philistine contingents in his army (2 Sam 8:18; 15:18–22), paralleling Ramesside practices (see Sherden under Ramesses III in Pritchard 1969: 262). He married a Geshurite princess (2 Sam 3:3). He moved the Israelite Ark into Canaanite Jerusalem (2 Sam 6), possibly the first step in an effort to create a religious atmosphere palatable to all sides, an effort that was completed when Solomon encased the ark in a Canaanite-style temple (1 Kgs 6; see A. Mazar 1990: 376–78). Possibly with similar intent, David established the probably non-Israelite Zadok, perhaps a local Jerusalemite priest, as a co-high priest alongside an Israelite high priest (Ramsey 1992; Rendsburg 1996: 55–57). Solomon more famously so (1 Kgs 5:13–16) but also David before him (perhaps late in his reign; see 2 Sam 20:24) utilized a Canaanite-style corvée labor system, supervised by one Adoram, a man whose name suggests his non-Israelite origin (Mendelsohn 1942: 14–15 n. 58; 1962: 32; Cogan 2001: 204).<sup>1</sup> In appointing his successor, David bypassed his oldest surviving son, Adonijah, who was born in Hebron and bore a Yahwistic name (2 Sam 3:4), in favor of Solomon, who was born in Jerusalem and whose name no doubt was intentionally chosen because it resembled that of the city. In this light, one can see why Solomon had the backing of Zadok in the struggle for the succession (1 Kgs 1:8, 39–45). Hiram, the Canaanite king of Tyre, provided David with cedarwood and craftsmen for the construction of a palace or possibly for the refurbishment of the palace of the previous ruler

1. Cogan (2001), following others (e.g., Greenfield 1999), suggests that the name *Adoram* in 2 Sam 20:24 and 1 Kgs 12:18, as well as the variant form *Hadoram* in 2 Chr 10:18, includes the theophoric element *Hadad/Adad*, the storm-god, known more popularly in Canaan as *Baal*. All persons whose names include the god Hadad mentioned in the Bible are indeed non-Israelites. I assume, as most scholars do, that the name *Adoniram* given to the same individual in 1 Kgs 4:6 and 5:14 was an ancient Israelite scribe's intentional alteration of the name *Adoram* to rid it of its overtly pagan character. Alternatively, as my colleague Gary A. Rendsburg informs me, the element Ad- at the beginning of the name *Adoram* may reflect the common noun 'ad, "father," attested in Ugaritic as an independent lexeme (KTU 1.23: 32, 43) and in Ugaritic and Phoenician personal names (Gordon 1967: 351; Gröndahl 1967: 88–89; Benz, 1972: 259–60; del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 1996–2000: 8). In fact, the name 'drm, the exact equivalent of *Adoram*, most likely is attested in Ugaritic (KTU 4.246: 7), although the broken context does not allow for a definitive conclusion ('drm could mean "nobles" in this case, as elsewhere in the Ugaritic texts). Even if the element Ad- in *Adoram* does derive from the noun 'ad, "father," and not from the divine name *Hadad/Adad*, we still may identify *Adoram* as a non-Israelite. This claim is based on the relatively common occurrence of this element in the Ugaritic and Phoenician onomastica but never in the several thousand known Israelite names (see Tigay 1986). This is not contradicted by the attestation of the feminine name 'dt', derived from the word 'dt, "lady," on a 7th-century seal most likely from Judah (Davies 1991: 139), although this name could also plausibly refer to a Canaanite goddess (Tigay 1986: 65). Regardless of the feminine name, we may aver that *Adoram* was a non-Israelite, in all probability a Canaanite.

(2 Sam 5:11; 1 Chr 14:1). By occupying the former ruler's home, David demonstrated that he was his legitimate successor.

Did David continue his efforts to ameliorate the feelings of his Canaanite subjects and solidify their loyalty to his dynasty by his choice of burial ground (Hachmann 1993: 39)? As has been shown by the hundreds of burials uncovered in Iron Age Israel, normal Judean practice was to inter the dead in extramural cemeteries (Bloch-Smith 1992: 137). This custom is further confirmed by the biblical prohibitions on handling corpses—or even touching graves—which were ritually polluting (Num 19:14–18). Why then did David choose to be buried inside a Canaanite town? Certainly the Canaanite kings who ruled in Jerusalem before him maintained royal burial grounds somewhere inside the settlement. Intramural burials were common in the MB II period, becoming less so in the Late Bronze Age (Gonen 1992a: 20–21), and royal burials no doubt preserved time-honored traditions. It seems quite possible that David usurped the burial grounds of his predecessors and consciously chose to be buried in Canaanite fashion, and that his followers subsequently continued to be buried in this same tradition.

The Canaanization of the Davidic dynasty is crucial to evaluating the probability that Weill's rock cuttings are, at least in part, remains of the royal tombs of his line. If David consciously chose to follow royal Canaanite burial practices that had their roots in the Bronze Age, we should look for parallels to Weill's tombs, not among the magnificent late Iron Age tombs that surround Jerusalem, but among elite tombs of second-millennium Canaan.

#### *Bronze Age and Iron Age I Material-Cultural Parallels*

Unfortunately, no Canaanite royal burials that could serve as definitive parallels have been found in Israel to date. However, royal burials of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages are known from neighboring Syria and Lebanon, at Ebla, Ugarit, and Byblos. Moreover, Weill's tombs may also be compared with certain elite-status Bronze Age tombs found in Israel.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the royal burials in Syria and Lebanon is their very plainness and simplicity of form. Almost nothing in their plan and construction distinguishes them from nonroyal burials. Their royal status is demonstrated only by their contents and/or architectural context within a royal establishment. At Ebla, for example, two royal tombs were found beneath Building Q, an MB II palace dated to ca. 1800 BC. This burial complex consists of two sets of rock-cut chambers of no special elegance, symmetry, or sophistication. Only their rich contents and their location beneath a palace signify their special status (Matthiae 1982; 1983; Guardata 1995). In Ugarit, the tomb found below the royal palace (Schaeffer 1951: 16, Figs. 7–8) was built essentially along the same lines as the ordinary tombs found throughout the city: a single ashlar-built burial chamber with a corbel roof and stepped dromos (for examples, see Schaeffer 1938: Fig. 42, Pls. 33:1–2, 35; 1951: 7–8, Fig. 1; Margueron 1977: 175–78, Figs. 9–10, Pls. 8, 10:5). The location of the tomb within the palace determines its royal status. Finally, one example from Byblos will suffice: Tomb V, in which the

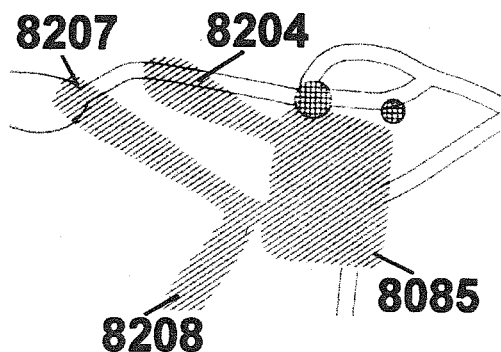


Fig. 4. Plan of Hazor Shaft Tomb Complex, Stratum 4, MB IIB (after Yadin 1975: 73, top illustration).

famous sarcophagus of Ahiiram was found (Montet 1928: 215–38; 1929: Pls. 15, 72, 125–43). This again is a simple burial: a shaft entrance opening into an irregularly shaped, roughly cut chamber (Montet 1929: Pls. 125–27). The tomb yielded several Egyptian objects, including two bearing the name of Ramesses II (Montet 1928: 225–28; 1929: Pl. 142:883); its location within the royal necropolis, however, together with the inscription and iconography on the coffin (Montet 1928: 228–38; 1929: Pls. 128–41) that indicate that its owner was a king. Unfortunately, the difficult stratigraphic situation at Byblos makes associating Tomb V with any above-ground structure impossible.

The comparative material from Syria and Lebanon demonstrates that the sophisticated rock-cutting techniques and architectural forms common in late Judean burials are not sufficient grounds for simply dismissing Weill's tombs as candidates for the Davidic dynastic cemetery.

Are there any parallels to Weill's tombs closer to home in southern Canaan? As mentioned above, strict parallels from Late Bronze Age Canaan do not exist, because no decidedly royal tombs have come to light in ancient Israel. The vast majority of burials known from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages are in caves (natural or partially reshaped) or pits and are also primarily extramural (Gonen 1992a: 9–20). Intramural burials, as might be expected for royalty in order to enhance security, are rare and tend to belong to the Middle Bronze Age (Gonen 1992a: 20–21, 98–123; 1992b: 151–57).

At Hazor, however, in Area F in the lower city, there is a series of intramural, rock-cut chambers from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (Fig. 4) that may be a very close parallel to Weill's tombs.

In the Middle Bronze Age Stratum 4, a roughly rectangular shaft (8085) was found, ca. 8 × 6 m and 8 m deep, off of which opened three chambers, described as "large caverns" (Yadin 1975: 75). The information on these chambers is sketchy and incomplete; the longest (8207) was 15 m (Figs. 4–5). From the plan in the final report (Yadin et al. 1989: Pl. 36) and a sketch (Yadin 1972: Fig. 8), it seems that chamber 8204 was ca. 10 m long and chamber 8208 ca. 6 m long, although the latter apparently was unfinished. All the chambers were ca. 2–3 m in width. They were empty except for a few MB IIB vessels, having been plundered

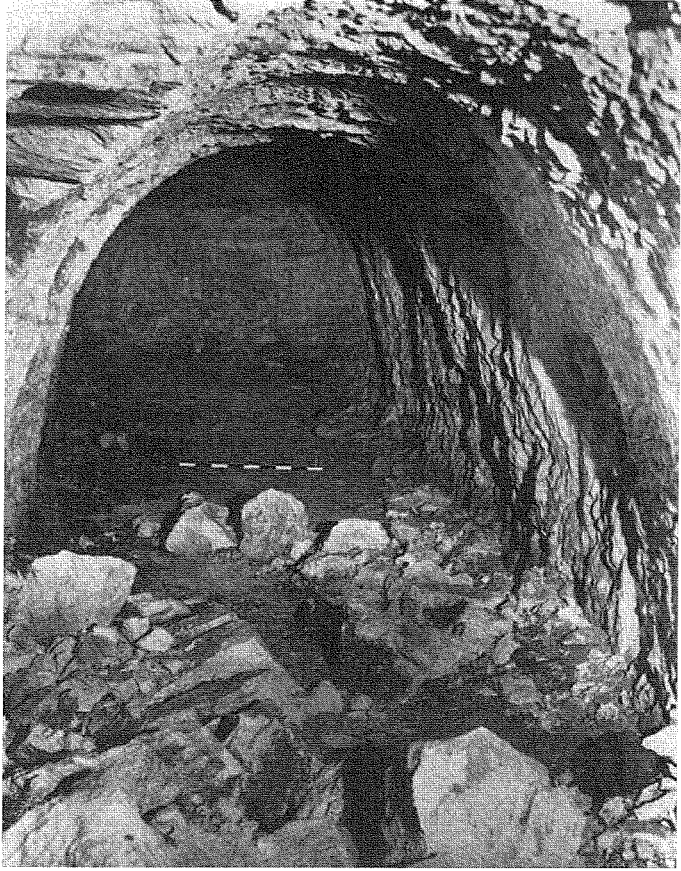


Fig. 5. Hazor Tomb 8207, Stratum 4, MB IIB (Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. 62:2).

in antiquity (Yadin 1972: 44; 1975: 75–76; Yadin et al. 1961: Pl. 239). The sheer size of these Middle Bronze Age chambers led Yadin to suggest that the interred might have been of noble standing (1972: 44).

These Stratum 4 tombs were found below a Stratum 3 building, which, due to its size and massive construction, Yadin initially believed to be a palace but which he eventually called the Double Temple (1975: 70–71). The Stratum 3 structure was found in an extremely fragmentary condition, and much of its reconstructed plan is conjectural. Its identification as a temple is based on Yadin's comparison of it with the Sin-Shamash Double Temple at Ashur and his understanding of the continuing cultic associations of the area over time (Yadin et al. 1989: 138). While the precise function of the building is unclear, it is certain that it was a monumental public structure associated with elite segments of Hazor's population. The functional relationship of this building, if any, to the chambers below is unknown: it is uncertain whether the tombs indeed predate the structure above them or whether they are a burial complex dug below a previously existing building, as in the examples from Syria and Lebanon cited above.

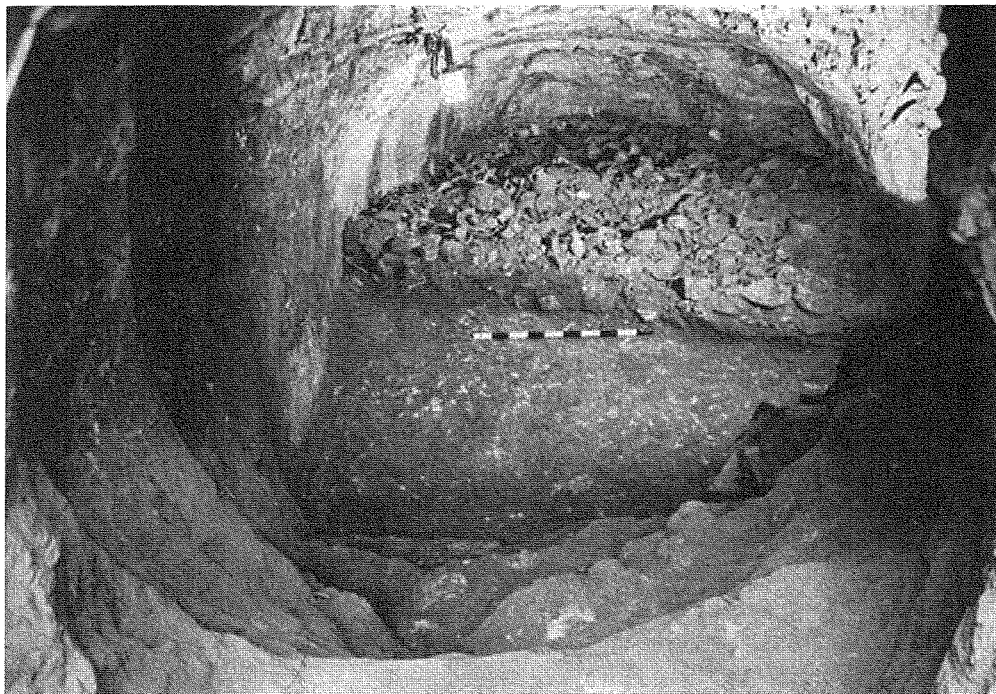


Fig. 6. Burial Cave 8144, Stratum 1B, LB II (Yadin et al. 1960: Pl. 50:2).

Stratum 1B Burial Cave 8144 (Fig. 6) belongs to the Late Bronze Age II, ca. 1350 BC. It was entered through a 1-m-wide, 1.12-m-deep shaft, which was covered by two stone slabs. At the base of this short shaft were four stairs descending into a chamber 5.15 m long and 2.80 m wide. Beyond a low partition wall located ca. 2 m from the entrance, more than 500 vessels, including Mycenaean and Cypriote imports, were found. Human remains, while plentiful, were poorly preserved due to water seepage, although remarkably little dirt had accumulated within (Yadin et al. 1960: 140–41, Pls. 49, 50, 210, 128–38; Yadin 1972: 45–46, Pl. 12a; 1975: 63–65; Gonen 1992a: 144–46, Fig. 21a).

The entrance to Burial Cave 8144 was found near the northeastern corner of the Stratum 3 temple/palace. Most of the Stratum 1B building remains in its vicinity seem to be courtyard houses, but there is no clear relationship between the tomb and any of these nearby houses.

The tunnel-like form of the Hazor chambers (Yadin 1972: Pl. 5c; 1975: 75, bottom photograph; Yadin et al. 1960: Pl. 50; Fig. 4 here) and the broad, flat chiseling marks are similar to those in the tombs discovered by Weill. The labor invested in cutting the Hazor tombs and the rich assemblage of imports found in one cave indicate that these were not common burials. If the Stratum 4 tombs are associated with the massive Stratum 3 building above them, this may be another indication of their elite status.

The existence of burials at Hazor that are roughly comparable to Weill's tombs, combined with the evidence from Ebla, Ugarit, and Byblos, demonstrate that royal burials of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages need not be elaborate or possess the finer chiseling more typical of late Iron Age tombs and provide support for accepting a possible identification of Weill's tombs as comprising at least part of the necropolis of the pre-7th-century line of David. Weill's Tombs 1-3 (Figs. 1-3) would, in fact, fit quite well into the general picture we have of intramural Middle-Late Bronze Age burials. It may even be possible to suggest, based on the evidence from Hazor and Byblos, that the original entrances to Weill's Tombs 1-3 were via shafts, long since removed by quarrying.

If Weill's tombs are the remnants of the Canaanite and Davidic royal burial grounds, this has important implications for the topography of 10th-century and earlier Jerusalem. The Middle Bronze-Iron I tomb parallels noted above were often found below or at least in the vicinity of royal palaces. In the account of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in Neh 3, the "upper house of the king" (3:25) was apparently located north of the tombs of the Davidic kings (3:16) but south of the Water Gate (3:27). The Water Gate most likely led to the vicinity of the Gihon Spring and would have been located somewhere near but to the east of Shiloh's Area G (1984: Fig. 3). This suggests that the Canaanite palace complex refurbished by David (2 Sam 5:11) lay to the south of the famous stepped-stone structure in Area G. If so, what building stood on top of the artificially broadened platform created by this monumental structure? The most logical candidate would be a temple to the local deity. Thus, when Solomon constructed his palace complex in the area of the Ophel and his temple farther up-slope, he would have been following the already-existing local tradition established in the City of David.

The archaeological and historical data presented above demonstrate that it is methodologically unsound to insist on comparing Weill's tombs with late Iron Age tombs in Jerusalem; that pre-Davidic parallels for Weill's tombs do exist within the bounds of ancient Canaan; that royal tombs of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages were often simple constructions; and that, given the circumstances David faced, it is altogether likely that he would have found it politically expedient to usurp and use the old Canaanite royal burial grounds within Jerusalem (Hachmann 1993: 39-40). There is every reason to continue to accept Weill's tombs as viable candidates for the remnants of the burial grounds of the early Davidic kings.

### *The Tombs of Manasseh and His Son*

#### *A Garden Burial?*

According to the evidence in the book of Kings, 12 of the 14 rulers of Judah from David to Ahaz were buried in the Davidic cemetery. Hezekiah was buried in the "ascent to the tombs of the sons of David" (2 Chr 32:33). Thereafter, no other kings were buried in the old royal burial grounds. From the time of Hezekiah's son Manasseh, new burial practices were apparently followed: 2 Kgs 21:18 re-

counts that "Manasseh slept with his ancestors and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza." This is paralleled in 2 Chr 33:20: "So Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in his house." Manasseh's son Amon was interred in a similar fashion, according to 2 Kgs 21:26a: "He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza." These are the only two kings that the Hebrew text states were buried in this fashion (although the LXX version of 2 Chr 36:8 recounts a similar fate for Jehoiakim). Ezekiel 43:7–9, which refers to the presence of the corpses of Judean kings just beyond the temple compound, is probably an allusion to the burials of Manasseh and Amon. If so, this passage is the best available evidence for the location of the otherwise enigmatic garden of Uzza.<sup>2</sup> That the garden of Uzza is said to be part of the royal-palace complex adjoining the temple indicates that all efforts to locate it outside the walls of the City of David must be abandoned (Ussishkin 1993: 330): for example, on the Mount of Olives (B. Mazar 1975: 187), on the eastern slope of the western hill (Barkay 1977: 76–78), or in the vicinity of the St. Étienne tombs (Kloner 1986: 129 n. 43).

Why were Manasseh and his son Amon buried in the garden of their palace? Normal Judean burial practice was to inter the dead outside the settlement (Barkay 1992: 359). Burial within the settlement, especially within a dwelling, would be an aberration, since touching a corpse or even a grave led to extreme ritual impurity (Num 19:16; also 5:2; 31:19). As discussed above, an exception was made for members of the royal line, who were allowed to be buried within the city walls but in their own tomb complex. Some have suggested on the basis of 2 Chr 32:33 that Hezekiah's burial was on the very outskirts of the original royal necropolis and that, after his time, the royal burial grounds were full; accommodation had, therefore, to be found elsewhere for the later kings (Kloner 1986: 129). There are several weaknesses in this theory, however. First, even if Weill's tombs were part of the royal necropolis, as a result of the quarrying in the area we will never be sure of the full extent of the cemetery and therefore cannot be certain of its capacity. Second, we know little about how the royal corpses were treated<sup>3</sup> or where other members of the royal family were buried. Thus, any argument for the disposition of post-Hezekianic royal burials based on an assumed lack of space in the royal necropolis must be treated with extreme caution.

Another possibility, alluded to above, is that the Canaanite royal necropolis was adjacent to the pre-Davidic royal palace—that is, that local custom dictated that all royal burials be associated with a palace, and what Manasseh did was merely to transfer this practice from the area of the old Canaanite palace to the area of the Solomonic palace complex to the north. However, the insistence in

2. Attempts to link the garden of Uzzah with either King Uzziyah (Yeivin 1948: 34–42) or the Uzzah of the ark story (Krauss 1947: 104–6; B. Mazar 1975: 187) are, to me, unconvincing: not all biblical names that sound roughly alike are necessarily related.

3. Ceremonies such as lamenting and ritual burnings marked these occasions (2 Chr 16:14); the bodies were buried with spices (2 Chr 16:14; Jer 34:5) and could have been laid out on a bier (Hebrew *משכב*, generally a place for lying down). It is uncertain whether Judean kings were buried in coffins, such as that of Ahiaram at Byblos (see above), or laid out on benches, as in ordinary and even elite Iron Age tombs (Bloch-Smith 1992: 147–52).

the texts that the burials were within the palace suggests that Manasseh had initiated a new practice.

### *The Assyrian Connection*

There is another solution to this puzzle, however, that does not rely on speculation regarding the capacity of the Davidic necropolis but is firmly established in the sociopolitical milieu of the 7th century BC. The suggestion advanced here is that Manasseh and Amon (and Jehoiakim?) were buried in their palatial gardens, not because of overcrowding in the royal tombs, but because they deliberately chose to follow a burial custom alien to the traditions of their royal predecessors; that is, they chose to be buried in imitation of Assyrian burial customs (Hachmann 1996: 235, 237).

The practice of interring the dead beneath one's home had long been abandoned in Iron Age Israel, with the possible exception of royal burials. This, however, was always the standard practice in Mesopotamia from the second millennium onward (Baker 1995) and was customary, not only for ordinary people, but also for royalty. The graves of Aššur-bel-kala, Šamši-Adad V, and Aš-šurnaširpal II, along with three unidentified burials, are known from Ashur (Haller 1954: 170–81; Preusser 1955: 27) and those of two royal women are known from the Northwest Palace at Nimrud (Mallowan 1966: 114–16). More recent excavations at Nimrud have revealed the graves of the wives of Sargon II and Tiglath-pileser III (Harrington 1990a; 1990b). Common burials were most often in ceramic, "bathtub"-shaped containers or in large bell-shaped, ceramic jars; royal burials were in stone or ceramic coffins. More than 30 examples of the common "tub"- and jar-type burials have been found in Israel and in the immediately surrounding regions (Zorn 1993; 1997), including one in Jerusalem itself (Bloch-Smith 1992: 222–23). The majority were found in key centers that would have been of interest to the Assyrians and their successors, the Babylonians (e.g., Megiddo, Hazor, Dor, Amman, Tell el-Far'ah [N], and Jezreel); Assyrian officials who were stationed, died, and buried in these centers were the likely means by which the practice was introduced to the local population. Most of these coffins and jars were found inside ancient settlements, although some were found in tombs, showing a mixing of Israelite and Mesopotamian practices. Since Manasseh and Amon were buried in their palace garden, not below the paving of the palace floor, they were not strictly following the Assyrian practice but were using a burial practice inspired by the Assyrians.<sup>4</sup>

That the kings of Judah should adopt a foreign burial practice is not surprising; the trappings of the Assyrian imperial presence penetrated deep into Judah and its neighbors in the latter part of the Iron Age (Miller and Hayes 1986: 370–72; Gane 1997). Besides the burial coffins and jars mentioned above, Assyrian-type palaces and residences, cuneiform inscriptions, cylinder seals, Palace Ware pottery, and metal objects have been found in Judah, Israel, Philistia, and Trans-

4. Little is known about the huge courtyard areas inside Assyrian palaces, which presumably were open to the sky. Could they possibly have housed small palace gardens?

jordan (A. Mazar 1990: 544–47; Barkay 1992: 351–53; Machinist 1992: 69–76; Reich 1992: 214–22). Assyrian officers may have been stationed in Jerusalem itself (Isa 33:19; 28:11). Mesopotamian cultic practices are attested in the 7th–6th centuries in Jerusalem, even within the temple compound itself. These included the veneration of Tammuz (Ezek 8:14; see Handy 1992), the Horses of the Sun (2 Kgs 23:11; see Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 288), and the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18; 44:17–25; see Schmitz 1992), who at the least was a syncretized form of the East Semitic Ishtar and West Semitic Astarte.<sup>5</sup>

If the tradition that Manasseh was temporarily imprisoned in Babylon is historical (2 Chr 23:11), his firsthand experience of the accoutrements of Assyrian royal power would have been another avenue for the introduction of Mesopotamian practices in Jerusalem.

Assyrian military superiority in the days of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and the first half of the reign of Ashurbanipal was overwhelming, and Assyrian material culture, including burial practices, was widespread in Judah and among its neighbors. Manasseh may have adopted Assyrian practices, including burial customs, in order to bolster his power and prestige in the minds of his own people; these practices would demonstrate his strong links with the all-powerful Assyrians and thus cow any opposition. He and his son may also have been following a practice of Assyrianization in order to appease their overlords; it would not be surprising if these vassal rulers attempted to demonstrate their loyalty to their Assyrian masters, even in death, by being buried in their palace in the Assyrian manner.

### Conclusion

Due to the disturbed nature of much of the material in the City of David and the relatively limited areas in which excavations have been conducted, together with the terse descriptions of the royal burials in the literary sources, it will probably never be possible to arrive at an understanding of the precise location and appearance of the tombs of the Davidic kings or the nature of the burials of

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5. Unfortunately, most of the discussion regarding the impact of Assyrian cult in Judah/Jerusalem has focused on whether the Assyrians *imposed* the worship of Ashur on their vassals, such as Judah, and indeed whether Ashur was worshiped within the temple complex in Jerusalem itself (McKay 1973; Cogan 1974; Spieckermann 1982; see Machinist 1992: 75–76 for a brief survey). There is no doubt that “foreign” deities were worshiped in Jerusalem. 1 Kgs 11:7, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13; and Zeph 1:5 attest to the royally sponsored worship of Ashtoreth of Sidon, Chemosh of Moab, and Milcom of Ammon on the Mount of Olives, within plain sight of the Temple of Yahweh itself. Certainly the worship of these deities was not *imposed* on the Judean kings; these cultic sites were established by them to enhance their sociopolitical (and economic?) relations with their neighbors. Thus, it is possible that official public worship of an Assyrian deity (or deities) could have been conducted in Jerusalem at the instigation of the Judeans, not the Assyrians. We must also not forget that the worship of Assyrian deities in Jerusalem need not have had “official” status—that is, need not have been carried out within the confines of the Temple of Yahweh. Pro-Assyrian Judeans, even members of the royal family and officialdom, who equated Assyrian military superiority with cultural superiority, may have chosen to adopt privately a variety of Assyrian practices, including the worship of Assyrian deities. We need to move away from the strict confines of a debate concerning Assyrian-imposed public worship of the Assyrian national deity toward other possible arenas of Assyrian cultic influence.

Manasseh and his son that will be completely satisfying to all scholars. However, by shifting the focus of the analysis away from simple comparisons with what is known of the burials of Jerusalem nobility in the 8th century and later to include a broader range of data from different eras and cultures, it may be possible to paint a broader, more-nuanced picture that will find a higher level of scholarly acceptance. Royal Judean burial practices may have first followed local Canaanite traditions in order to secure the allegiance of non-Israelite segments of the population and later shifted to a Mesopotamian style in order to show local allegiance to an outside power.

### *Addendum*

As this article was going to press a new contribution on the burials of the Davidic kings by N. Na'aman was brought to my attention (2004). Like those before him Na'aman compares what are potentially rock-cut tombs of the 10th century (or earlier, if David usurped those of his predecessors) with tombs of the late 8th century or later and finds them wanting (pp. 247–48). As this article has made clear, this assumption and the deductions and conclusions that flow from it are not necessary if Weill's tombs are viewed from an alternative historical perspective. He also asserts that the garden of Uzza (2 Kgs 21:8, 26), where Manasseh and his son were buried, is the same as the garden of the kings (p. 250), generally to be located at the south end of the Kidron Valley (Neh 3:15; Jer 39:4, 52:7). As a corollary, this theory necessitates an additional and otherwise unattested new palace in an exposed position outside the city walls at the south end of the Kidron Valley (p. 250). However, there is no proof of this. It is quite possible that the royal administrative complex in the Ophel could have had gardens or park-like areas of its own, either early on or developed by Manasseh himself and that the king's garden was simply another garden outside the city's walls.

Finally, it is important to note that, if royal burials within Jerusalem began with David, the only place he could have been buried is inside the old Canaanite city (which more than likely would also have been very close to the Canaanite palace used by David), not the Ophel area, as Na'aman would have it. This would have set an important precedent that his successors would most likely have followed. It is more likely that Neh 3:16 recalls this centuries-old practice rather than that of the foreign-influenced burials of the despised Manasseh and Amon. Ezekiel's words seem a more fitting condemnation for these later kings, who chose to be buried in the Ophel, than those of the early kings buried far to the south.

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