

## ISRAELITE (IRON AGE II) BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE JERUSALEM AREA IN THE LIGHT OF BIBLICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Around Jerusalem several cemeteries dating to the Israelite Iron Age II were excavated and each has its own characteristics. The Israelite practice was to place the burial places near the cities, but outside the town walls. The exceptions were the tombs of the kings, which were inside the City of David (1 Kings 2,10; Neh. 3,16). The variety of forms of tombs was caused by heterogeneous population, social hierarchy, and foreign influence. In this paper we describe briefly the Iron Age necropolises in the Jerusalem area (Village of Silwan, area of St. Etienne's Monastery, the Hinnom Valley and the Kidron Valley, the Tyropoeon Valley, and other tombs) confronting archeological evidence with biblical data. On the basis of archeological and biblical data we can deduce the most important and common beliefs concerning the death and afterlife of Israelites in this period.

### I. TEXTUAL DATA

There is a discussion among archeologists which data can be called "textual data". There is no doubt that the Bible as a written source belongs to textual evidence, but the problem arises when we consider various kinds of inscriptions. Are they textual or perhaps archeological data? Avoiding the trial of resolving this problem, we decided to compare the funeral inscriptions to the textual data in this paper. Even if they are still archeological evidence, to interpret the inscriptions we use the same linguistic methods as for the interpretation of the Bible.

#### a. Biblical data

Biblical names for the dead give us a certain view about beliefs of Israelites concerning the afterlife. The dead in the Bible are known by the name  $\sim yhil\{a/$ , "divine ones" (1 Sam. 28,13; Isa. 19,3) and  $\sim yviAdq.$ , "holy ones" (Ps. 16,3); thus they were believed to be connected to God in some way. The name  $\sim ynI[oD>YIh,$ ,"knowing ones" (Isa. 8,19) reveal that their knowledge is greater than that of the living. The biblical formula indicating death "to be gathered to the ancestors" (Gen. 25,8; 35,29; Num. 20,24; Judg. 2,10) can be interpreted in two ways: either meaning to deposit the bones of the dead into the grave, or to join the ancestors of the deceased in Sheol<sup>1</sup>. Israelites believed that after death the members of a family remain together in a very similar way as they were in life<sup>2</sup>. Maybe we can see here also a distinction between primary and secondary burials. Biblical phrases like "gathered to his kin" or "gathered to his fathers" (Gen. 49.29; 2 Kings 22.20) can be explained like an allusion to secondary burials<sup>3</sup>. Very interesting example of secondary interment is the biblical story about the reburial by David of the bones of Saul and of Jonathan (2 Sam. 21.13; 1 Chron. 10.12; 1 Sam. 31.11-13). Primary and secondary burials occur sometimes in the same burial room. After the corpse was decarnated the bones were collected into an ossuary or repository<sup>4</sup>.

There is a discussion among historians and archeologists about the location of royal burial sites. We can find in the Bible some data about the location of royal necropolis, but these data do not resolve the problem. As mentioned above 1 Kings says that David (1 Kings 2,10), Solomon (1

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<sup>1</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, Sheffield 1992, 110.

<sup>2</sup> S.Yievin, "The Sepulchres of the Kings of the House of David" in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 7 (1948) 30.

<sup>3</sup> G.Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III" in A.Ben-Tor (red.) *The Archeology of Ancient Israel*, New Haven-London 1992, 359.

<sup>4</sup> E.M.Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine" in *The Biblical Archeologist* 33 (1970) 11.

Kings 11,43) and their successors were buried in the City of David<sup>5</sup>. 2 Chronicles says that Hezekiah was buried on the same hill where the tombs of David's descendants are (2 Chron. 32,33). However, Jehoram and Judah were not buried in the tombs of the kings, but in the City of David (2 Chron. 21,20; 24,25). Similarly, Uzziah was buried in the City of David in a field for royal tombs (2 Kings 15,7; 2 Chron. 26,23). Manasseh was buried in his palace garden (2 Kings 21,18; 2 Chron. 33,20). His son's tomb (Amon) is in the same place (2 Kings 21,26)<sup>6</sup>.

Excavations show four possibilities for the location of royal tombs: two on the slopes of the Mount of Olives (across from the temple platform and at the site of the village of Silwan), one above the Pool of Siloam and one at the Tyropoeon Valley. Until today we have no clear evidence where the royal necropolis was<sup>7</sup>. The kings afflicted with punishment from God (for example, illness) were buried in their own tombs and not with the others. This is the case of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21,20), mentioned above, leprous Uzziah (2 Chron. 26,23), Ahaz, who was excluded from the royal tombs (2 Chron. 28,27) and Asa, during whose funeral "a very great fire was made" (2 Chron. 16,14), which probably resembled the burnt-offering sacrifices "as a smell pleasing to Yahweh" (Lev. 1,9.18). Also murdered kings were denied burial with their predecessors: Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22,9), Joash (2 Chron. 24,25), and Amaziah (2 Chron. 25,28)<sup>8</sup>.

According to the Bible, the Iron Age II necropolises for common people were in Hinnom Valley and Kidron Valley (2 Kings 23,6; Jer. 7,32-33; 22,18-19; 26,23). In Jer. 31,40 the fields "as far back as the brook Kidron" probably can be interpreted as the burial grounds<sup>9</sup>. These two valleys were also known as a place of the sacrifices attributed to Baal. The practice of sacrificing children was prohibited by the Torah (Lev. 18,21; 20,2-5). According to Jer. 16,4 the sinners, who did not serve Yahweh were cursed with denial of interment: "They will die of deadly diseases, un lamented and unburied". The same practice is mentioned in Deut. 28,25-26; 1 Kings 13,22; 14,10-11.

The Biblical commandment to honor father and mother was sometimes interpreted as an "obligation to maintain ownership of family property with the ancestral tomb so as to provide "honor" after death as well as in life"<sup>10</sup>. The honor included lamenting (1 Kings 13,30; Jer. 22,18), sacrifices (Isa. 57,5; 2 Chron. 16,14), and probably services to perpetuate the memory of the dead. Also the practice of feeding the dead through sacrifices was known (Deut. 26,24; Ps. 106,28; Num. 25,2; Ps. 16,3-4; 2 Chron. 32,33). The so-called "annual sacrifice" (1 Sam. 2,19; 20,6) and "family sacrifice" (1 Sam. 20,29) were also practiced. For example "Elkanah offered his annual sacrifice and his vows and all the tithes of this land" (1 Sam. 1,21). This custom is very similar to the Mesopotamian *kispu*. "The *kispu* consisted of invoking the name of the departed, presenting food offerings, and pouring a water libation on the first, sixteenth or twenty-ninth day of the month according to the regional practice. The purpose of the *kispu* was to placate hostile spirits and to invoke the deceased's intercession on behalf of the living to insure family prosperity, and to safeguard the family inheritance"<sup>11</sup>.

In the Bible we can find a number of laws concerning the ritual impurity from physical contact with the deceased. People were not allowed to touch a corpse, a grave or a human bone (Num. 19,11.16), to enter a tent following a death (Num. 19,14), or to touch someone slain in battle (Num. 31,19). More severe restrictions were established for priests (for example the High Priest was not allowed to touch the corpse of his parents - Lev. 21,1-3.11). Purification of the impure person could be made on the third and seventh days according to the prescriptions of the law (Num. 19,9.12.17-19). He who did not fulfill the lengthy purification procedure was "cut off from Israel" (Num. 19,13).

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<sup>5</sup> In the tenth century C.E. Jewish tradition located the "Tomb of David" in the Upper City (present Mount Zion). Later this opinion was adopted by Christians who believed that the "Tomb of David" was exactly on the lower level of the Upper Room (see: A.Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord*, Garden City, New York 1975, 185).

<sup>6</sup> S.Yievin, "The Sepulchres of the Kings of the House of David"..., cit., 33-34.

<sup>7</sup> W.H.Mare, *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1987, 113-115.

<sup>8</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 118-119.

<sup>9</sup> A.Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord...*, cit., 188.

<sup>10</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 112.

<sup>11</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 124.

## b. Inscriptions

In the tombs at Silwan Village four funerary inscriptions were found. All of them are in Hebrew and were engraved on the facades of the three tombs: the "Tomb of the Pharaoh's Daughter", Tomb 34 and the "Tomb of the Royal Steward". In these latter tombs, two inscriptions were discovered, both of them poorly preserved. The longest one was deciphered by Avigad. His reading is as follows: "There is (the sepulchre of...)yahu who is over the house. There is no silver and no gold here, but (his bones) and the bones of his *amah* with him. Cursed be the man who will open this!" This inscription is the third longest inscription in Hebrew language, after the Moabite Stone and The Siloam tunnel inscription; it is also the first known text of the Hebrew inscription in the tombs from the pre-Exilic period<sup>12</sup>. The shorter inscription was more problematic in deciphering, but most scholars accept the reading: *heder beketep hassur...* - "(Tomb-)chamber in the side (or slope) of the rock (or mountain)..."<sup>13</sup>.

On Tomb 34 in the necropolis of Silwan inscription was found which contains three lines. In the first line is well preserved the word *qbrt*. The second line contains only one word and two letters of the following word. The third line of the inscription is not preserved. In the style of the script and probably in formula, the entire inscription is similar to the longer one in the "Tomb of the Royal Steward"<sup>14</sup>. The most probable reading of this inscription is: "(This is the) burial of Z... (the one) who op(ens this tomb)..."<sup>15</sup>.

In one of the tombs in Ketef Hinnom two plaques with inscriptions were found. Both were inscribed with formulas of benedictions very similar to the biblical Priestly Blessing (Num. 6.24-26). The larger plaques was inscribed with the words: "Bless you YHWH (and k)eeep you, (may) YHWH shine (His f)ac(e upon you and be gracious to you)"; the smaller one was inscribed with the words: "Bless you YHWH and keep you (may) shine YHWH His face upon y(ou) and give you pea(ce)". These verses dating to seventh century B.C.E. are the oldest biblical verses found outside the Bible<sup>16</sup>.

## II. NECROPOLISES OF JERUSALEM IN THE LIGHT OF BIBLICAL DATA

### a. The Village of Silwan

The necropolis of Silwan is located on the eastern slope of the Kidron Valley, opposite the "City of David" and the Temple Mount. The tombs of the necropolis are hewn into upper and lower cliff. This spot was chosen probably because of the rock of the hill, easy to quarry *meleke* limestone. The entire necropolis contains 50-60 tombs<sup>17</sup>. Twenty seven of them are hewn into the lower cliff, which begins at the north end of Silwan and proceeds in a southern direction. The other tombs belong to the upper cliff, which is divided into a higher and lower ledge. The higher one is very steep<sup>18</sup>. In this cemetery archeologists identified three groups of tombs: tombs with gabled ceiling, those with a flat ceiling, and monolithic, above-ground tombs<sup>19</sup>. The tombs with a gabled ceiling are relatively small (prepared for single or double burial). Because of their location in the upper part of the lower cliff, the access to this group of tombs required a climb. Most of them have

<sup>12</sup> N.Avigad, "The Epitaph of Royal Steward from Siloam Village" in *Israel Exploration Journal* 3 (1953) 152.

<sup>13</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan. The Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom*, Jerusalem 1993, 250.

<sup>14</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 245-246.

<sup>15</sup> D.Ussishkin, "The Necropolis from the Time of the Kingdom of Judah at Silwan, Jerusalem" in *The Biblical Archeologist* 33 (1970) 44.

<sup>16</sup> G.Barkay, "Excavations in Ketef Hinnon in Jerusalem" in H.Geva (red.) *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*. Jerusalem 1994, 103.

<sup>17</sup> S.Loffreda suggested that the chronology of the necropolis should be lowered by more than 500 years. According to his opinion the tombs are from Late Hellenistic or Early Roman period, but his argumentation is rather weak in rejecting three main reasons which suggest rather pre-exiling dating of monolithic tombs: the inscriptions in old Hebrew script, the lack of Hellenistic influence and the old Egyptian prototypes (see his article "The Late Chronology of some Rock-cut Tombs of Selwan Necropolis" in *Studi Biblici Francescani: Liber Annuus* 23 (1973) 7-36).

<sup>18</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 25-34.

<sup>19</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 43.

a square entrance and a frame carved on the inner side of the entrance. Archeologists can not say precisely how the entrances were closed. In the single-burial tombs the entrance was probably sealed with masonry, in other cases perhaps square stones were used. In this type of tomb, the trough in the burial niche had a lid. The head-rest was usually carved in the trough, so that the head of the dead pointed in the direction of the entrance. The second group of tombs in the Silwan necropolis are the tombs with a flat ceiling. They are located on the upper cliff and at the southern end of the lower cliff. The entrances to these tombs are rectangular. No system concerning the resting places can be established. Some of them had a niches containing troughs without lids, other had niches with burial benches. Probably the stone sarcophagi and wooden coffins were used in this type of tomb<sup>20</sup>.

There are two impressive tombs in the necropolis of Silwan: the "Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter" and the "Tomb of the Royal Steward". The name of the "Tomb of the Pharaoh's Daughter" resembles the theory that "the structure was a temple erected by Solomon in honour of Pharaoh's daughter"<sup>21</sup>. This is a monolithic tomb built above ground and shaped inside and outside by stone-cutting. It stands in an open space and is surrounded by natural rock walls. The present roof of the tomb is flat, but probably originally a pyramid crowned it<sup>22</sup>. In the layer of earth covering the roof remains of the base of the pyramid were found. Above the original entrance was carved a panel for a funerary inscription. Well preserved is the letter *resh* and part of another letter, which could be a *qoph*, a *daleth*, a *resh* or even a *beth*<sup>23</sup>. In the resting place in the chamber of the tomb can be discerned two channels carved parallel to the edges of the bench and the hollow. If the dead was laid with the head towards the front wall, the channels and the hollow were near the head of the deceased. What was the purpose of the hollow? Maybe we can find the answer in 2 Chron. 16,14. This verse describes the burial of Asa, king of Judah: "He was buried in the tomb which he had ordered to be cut for him in the City of David. He was laid in the burial chamber which was filled with perfume blended from all sorts of oils, and a very great funeral fire was made for him". There is a possibility that also the hollow in the "Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter" was prepared for "all sorts of oils" as a funeral gifts.

The "Tomb of the Royal Steward" is a monolithic above-ground monument, which is separated from the cliff. It consisted originally of an outer and an inner chamber, hewn next to each other. Later both chambers were joined creating almost a rectangular chamber. In the lateral chamber, in the front wall, a niche for a single resting place was hewn. Inside the tomb an unusual installation was found, which probably had some function in burial rites. The installation was carved outside the entrance of the tomb and was used probably as an offering table. Because of its location it could be reused many times during funeral practices. Because there are known only a few installations connected with burial practices, all of them are very important in our understanding of funerary ceremonies. We can assume that they were prepared by the tomb owners or according to their wishes during their lifetime<sup>24</sup>.

As we mentioned above, in the "Tomb of the Royal Steward" two inscriptions were found. The above-quoted longer inscription states that a royal steward and his *amah* were buried in the tomb. Probably it was in a double resting place. Who was the owner of this tomb? We can assume that he was Jewish because of the theophoric suffix of the name. The function of the royal steward as a very important official among the functionaries of the king was known in Judah and in Israel. The steward was responsible for the royal household. Many scholars believe that we can precisely identify the owner of this tomb as Shebanyahu whose abbreviated name is Shebna<sup>25</sup>. The clue for such an interpretation is given by the passage of the prophet Isaiah: "The Lord Yahweh Sabaoth says this: Go and find that steward, Shebna, the master of the palace: "What do you own here, who gave you the right for you to hewn yourself a tomb here?" He is hewing himself a tomb, is digging

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<sup>20</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 257-266.

<sup>21</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 43.

<sup>22</sup> D.Ussishkin, "The Necropolis...", cit., 40.

<sup>23</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 242.

<sup>24</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 293.

<sup>25</sup> W.H.Mare, *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, cit., 116.

a resting-place for himself in the rock” (Isaiah 22, 15-16). This fragment supports the interpretation that the ”Tomb of the Royal Steward” is that of Shebna, because it ”is hewn in a high place and in a prominent position”<sup>26</sup>. It is interesting to consider the relationship between the ...yahu and his *amah*. Why was the maidservant buried in the tomb of the royal steward? According to Avigad she should be considered as a slave-wife who was inferior in position to his legal wife. We know from Exodus about a peculiar class of Hebrew free-born girls who could be sold by their father into slave-wifhood. The rights of such an *amah* were safeguarded by law (Exod. 21, 7-11). ”Legally, the *amah* was a bondwoman, but in practice her rank in the household depended entirely upon the position her master wished to give her”<sup>27</sup>. Sometimes, if the slave-wife bore children to her master, she could rise to the rank of a married woman. According to the Talmud, even a concubine could be considered as married<sup>28</sup>. Yadin suggests that *amah* is not a concubine, but a legally married wife, because the term *amah* is parallel to *ebed hamelekh* that is the royal steward. In 2 Kings 22, 12 it is said that Asahiah was ”a servant of the king”, so we can suppose that the wife of *ebed hamelekh* bore the title *amah*<sup>29</sup>.

The shorter inscription in the ”Tomb of the Royal Steward” states that the owner of the tomb built the tomb for himself during his lifetime. As the first word of the inscription (*heder*) is in singular form, it is clear that the inscription refers to only one burial chamber, which is the lateral chamber, because on its wall the inscription was engraved. The second word, *bktp*, can be used in geographical and topographical context, but also in an architectural one. The topographical context we can find, for example in the following:

Josh. 15,10: ~yrl['y>-rh; @t,K,-la, - ”the side of the mount Jearim”;

Josh. 15,8: ysiWby>h; @t,K,-la- ”the south side of the Jebusite”.

The use of architectural context of this word also can be find in the Bible: 1 Kings 6,8: ”the right side of the house”;

Ezek. 41,2: xt;P,h; bx;ro - ”the sides of the door”;

Ezek. 41,26: ~l'Wah' tApt.Ki-la, - ”the sides of the porch”;

Ezek. 46,19: r[;V;h; @t,K,-l[; - ”the side of the gate”.

The next word, *sariah*, is known from the three Nabatean inscriptions from Petra and from Mishnaic Hebrew. In both cases its meaning is similar - rock-cut chamber or rock-cut cave. In 1 Sam. 13,6 we can read that ”the people hid in caves, in holes, in crevices, in vaults (*serihim*), in wells”. The Book of Judges (9,46-49) relates the destruction of the town and citadel of Shechem: ”...all the leading men inside Migdal-Shechem took refuge in the crypt (*sariah*) of the temple of El-Berith... Abimelech took an axe in his hand, he cut off the branch of a tree... Each of his men similarly cut off a branch; then, following Abimelech, they pulled the branches over the crypt (*sariah*) and set it on fire over those who were inside...”<sup>30</sup>.

The second part of the shorter inscription from the ”Tomb of the Royal Steward” is missing. We can suppose that it gave the name of the buried person, probably a member of the royal steward`s family.

### **b. Area of St. Etienne`s Monastery**

In this area two rock-cut tombs were discovered from the period of the kingdom of Judah. Both of them are very large. The first one is composed of the forecourt, the entrance hall, five burial chambers with repository pits, and sarcophagi room. The ceiling of the entrance hall is very high<sup>31</sup>. A typical feature of Assyrian architecture is visible on the entrance to the hall: two protruding door sockets. The entrance has also an inner step. The hall itself is particularly large. Its walls were decorated with concave panels in rectangular shape. At the juncture of the walls and ceiling a double angular cornice was added. From the hall to the burial chambers lead openings in the walls.

<sup>26</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 329.

<sup>27</sup> N.Avigad, ”The Epitaph...”, cit., 145-146.

<sup>28</sup> N.Avigad, ”The Epitaph...”, cit., 146.

<sup>29</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 247-250.

<sup>30</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 250-253.

<sup>31</sup> A.Kloner, ”The ”Third Wall” in Jerusalem and the ”Cave of the Kings” in *Levant* 18 (1986) 128.

Each of the five burial rooms is of the similar size and plan. Each of them contained "burial benches with raised edges and horseshoe-shaped head-rests; the sides of some of the head-rests flared out in the shape recalling the hairstyle of the Egyptian goddess Hathor"<sup>32</sup>. The head-rests were cut from the rock and outside Jerusalem were rarely found, while they were found in most cemeteries in the city<sup>33</sup>. The burial chambers contained repository pits, which were shaped irregularly. One of the chambers was decorated very similarly to the entrance hall. Behind this decorated chamber was the sarcophagi room, the most important room of the entire tomb. Along its walls three sarcophagi were hewn<sup>34</sup>. The sarcophagi carved from the bedrock served as a form of arcosolia burial. They were intended for single burials<sup>35</sup>.

The second burial complex in the area of St. Etienne's monastery is very similar to the first one, except for a few minor differences. This similarity can be seen both in plan and architectural remains<sup>36</sup>. Architectural details recall royal tombs in the kingdom of Urartu in Anatolia and probably indicate connection with Phoenicia<sup>37</sup>. These burial caves belonged probably to the important families in Jerusalem. There is a possibility that there were two caves in the St. Etienne cemetery which served as a burial place of the last kings of Judah.

### **c. The Hinnom Valley and the Kidron Valley**

Many burial places were discovered also on the slopes of the Hinnom Valley. Most of them recall in form the common Iron Age burial caves, but some of them are large and elaborate (for example two cemeteries near St. Andrew's church)<sup>38</sup>. On the western slope of Mount Zion several burial caves were examined. A special importance is given to one cave, because it was found sealed and undisturbed. It included two chambers with rock-cut benches along the walls. Inside the skeletons and a pottery dated to Iron Age II were found. Among them was a bone seal with an engraved fish and the inscription: "(Belonging to) Hamiahel daughter of Manahem"<sup>39</sup>.

Outside the western city wall (south of the Citadel and Jaffa Gate) two tomb caves were also discovered. Both of them contained a forecourt and a small entrance which led to the burial room. One of these caves had two entrances. Inside two sarcophagi were found: one in the center of the chamber, the second one at the rear of the chamber. The sarcophagus in the center had a head-rest. The second cave had a facade decorated with a pair of smoothed pilasters. On both sides of the burial room were benches, and behind them - a niche on the same level, so that the place was prepared for two bodies<sup>40</sup>.

On the southwestern bank of the Valley of Hinnom nine tombs from the First Temple period were discovered. Five of these burial caves were similar in plan - three burial benches along the walls of the chamber. One of the tombs could be used for several burials on two levels, because it had a broad bench cut in the wall and beneath the bench was a burial room. This tomb included a forecourt and an entrance hall. From the entrance hall openings led to further burial rooms and a repository. Another tomb of this group had five burial chambers, a large central hall and a forecourt. One room contained only two benches, the other one had an unusually long bench with six head-rests. Beneath this long bench was a repository filled with burial offerings: pottery, jewelry and other artifacts from the eighth and seventh centuries. "The most important find consisted of two rolled-up silver plaques that had been used as charms. They were incised with benedictory formulas in ancient Hebrew script, including parts of the biblical priestly blessing"<sup>41</sup>:

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<sup>32</sup> N. Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem" in *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavation in the Holy Land II.*, Jerusalem 1993, 714.

<sup>33</sup> G. Barkay, A. Kloner, A. Mazar, "The Northern Necropolis of Jerusalem During the First Temple Period" in H. Geva (red.) *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem 1994, 122.

<sup>34</sup> N. Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem", cit., 714.

<sup>35</sup> E. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 41.

<sup>36</sup> N. Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem", cit., 714.

<sup>37</sup> A. Mazar, *Archeology of the Land of the Bible. 10,000 - 586 B.C.E.*, New York 1992, 521.

<sup>38</sup> A. Mazar, *The Archeology of the Land of the Bible*, cit., 521-522.

<sup>39</sup> N. Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem", cit., 715.

<sup>40</sup> N. Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem", cit., 715.

<sup>41</sup> N. Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem", cit., 715.

”May Yahweh bless you and keep you. May Yahweh let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May Yahweh show you his face and bring you peace” (Num. 6,24-26). It is obvious that the people who placed this gift into the tomb were confessors of Yahwism.

In the Mamilla area (the upper part of the Valley of Hinnom) another cemetery was excavated. Only two caves were found undisturbed (most of the tombs were destroyed because of quarrying). Both contained a forecourt, entrance and burial rooms with benches and a repository. Inside many pottery vessels and other artifacts dated to Iron Age II were found. Pottery found there includes a so called ”Pillar-Astarte”. ”Such figurines, though common enough among the inhabitants of Jewish Jerusalem and other cities of Judah and Israel, are rare in tombs of Jerusalem, although common in the tombs of other cities”<sup>42</sup>. Archeologists still speculate about the significance and use of the figurines. Maybe there is some connection between them and a cult associated with fertility worship<sup>43</sup>. The level of workmanship in the tombs of Mamilla area is of inferior quality. This fact and also the paucity of jewelry suggest that the tombs were used by the lower classes of society during the late Iron Age<sup>44</sup>.

The Valley of Hinnom began to be the principal necropolis for the Jerusalem population during the eighth century, when the inhabitants were spreading from the City of David to the southwestern hill. This necropolis was used mainly by the lower classes. A passage of Jeremiah says that during the kingdom of Judah ”the burial place of the common people” was in the Kidron Valley (Jer. 26,23). This is confirmed in the story about Josiah: ”And from the Temple of Yahweh he took the aced pole outside Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley and in the Kidron Valley he burnt it, reducing it to ashes and throwing its ashes on the common burial-ground” (2 Kings 23,6). In another place of his book the prophet speaks about the valley ”where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east” (Jer. 31,40). Some archeologists agree that this reference may suggest the point where Kidron Valley and Hinnon Valley join together<sup>45</sup>. If Kidron Valley really was a common burial ground, archeologists presume that it must have consisted of simple graves. Maybe there were burial fields which have not be located yet<sup>46</sup>. At the same time the nobility and officials of Jerusalem were buried in the cemetery of the present village of Silwan<sup>47</sup>.

#### **d. The Tyropoeon Valley**

Phoenician influence in Jerusalem is expressed in rock-cut tombs on the west slope of the Tyropoeon Valley (southwest corner of the Temple Mount). Until today fifteen tombs dating to the First Temple Period have been found here (the analysis made by Barkay and Kloner dated them to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.)<sup>48</sup>. These tombs may have belonged to the aristocratic families. Some of the archeologists maintain that this was a royal necropolis. 2 Chron. 26,23 states that Uzziah was buried ”in the field for burial that belonged to the kings”, so this field could be that place. Most of the tombs discovered there consisted of a square shaft leading into the burial room. Above the room was an opening covered with stone slabs or gable. The opening was thought to be the ”nephes” which is the symbol of the spirit of the dead<sup>49</sup> and was formed with square or rectangular shape. Some of the pottery found there dating to the eight century B.C.E. have inscriptions with personal names in the Hebrew script of the time of the monarchy<sup>50</sup>. One of the

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<sup>42</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, ”Ancient Jerusalem`s Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part Two” in *The Biblical Archeologist* 44 (1981) 234.

<sup>43</sup> T.A.Holland, ”A Study of Palestinian Iron Age Baked Clay Figurines, with special reference to Jerusalem: Cave 1” in *Levant* 9 (1977) 155.

<sup>44</sup> R.Reich, ”The Ancient Burial Ground in the Mamilla Neighborhood, Jerusalem” in H.Geva (red.) *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem 1994, 113.

<sup>45</sup> W.H.Mare, *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, cit., 117.

<sup>46</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 27-28.

<sup>47</sup> N.Avigad, ”The Tombs in Jerusalem”, cit.,715.

<sup>48</sup> N.Avigad, ”The Tombs in Jerusalem”, cit.,713.

<sup>49</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*, Jerusalem 1994, 31-33.

<sup>50</sup> W.H.Mare, *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, cit., 115-117.

vessels was inscribed with the name *yœ`yhw* - Isaiah<sup>51</sup>. "Secondary use as cisterns and additional cuttings have obliterated the Tyropoeon Valley tombs to the extent that it is impossible to ascertain their original form"<sup>52</sup>. All the caves were probably cleared of burials before the expansion of the city westward.

#### e. Others Tombs in Jerusalem

A typical feature of the First Temple period tombs is a burial chamber with three benches along the walls. The Garden Tomb (Gordon's Calvary) consisted of two burial chambers cut in rock side by side, so we can assume that this tomb is from the First Temple period. In fact, inside this tomb the pottery and lamps from Iron Age II were found<sup>53</sup>. From the same period are also two burial caves near Suleimann Street, both hewn into the Turonian *meleke* limestone, which is soft enough to allow a high standard of hewing, but does not easily crumble<sup>54</sup>. One of them included five burial chambers around the central hall. In this tomb pottery from eighth and seventh centuries were found. Among them were so called "water decanters", juglets and lamps. The second cave was hewn very precisely. In this tomb, among a few pieces of pottery holemouth jars were found<sup>55</sup>. Two iron objects in these cases were also found. They are probably arrowheads which caused the death of interred individuals and were not removed from the bodies<sup>56</sup>. In both of the burial chambers, which the tomb contained, were benches with horseshoe-shaped head-rests<sup>57</sup>.

In the area of the Siloam Pool three rock-cut tombs were discovered in the beginning of our century by R.Weill. Because of their size and plan, they were supposed to be a royal necropolis. One of the tombs has the form of a vaulted tunnel. In the shelf formed by the elevated floor level, the rectangular pit was cut, probably in order to hold a coffin. "Another tomb had a vertical shaft and a burial loculus at one side, which, together with the other tombs, convinced Weill that there was Phoenician influence evidenced here, a fact to be expected since Solomon had brought in Phoenician workers from the north (1 Kings 5)"<sup>58</sup>. A precise investigation of these tombs is very difficult because of the damage caused by a stone quarrying during the Roman period. Archeologists cannot even confirm that the tombs belonged to the Israelite periods.

### III. FUNERARY CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE DEAD

In the Iron Age II necropolises of the Jerusalem area several burial types can be distinguished. Among them are: simple graves, cave tombs, chamber tombs, shaft tombs, and bench tombs. Simple graves were ordinarily dug into the ground. Usually they contained one to three inhumations. The subterranean tombs reflect the view of Sheol as a nether world beneath the earth (Num. 16.20) or as "pit" (Psalm 26.7). These images were undoubtedly influenced by Canaanite and Mesopotamian mythology. Israelites probably derived not only from "foreign" metaphors, but also from the language of mythology<sup>59</sup>.

Cave tomb burials (in natural or hewn caves) were also very common. Israelites inherited from the Canaanites the custom of burying in family burial caves. A very common type of tomb included a square chamber with a small square entrance, sometimes closed by a large stone. Inside the room were usually three rock-cut benches, sometimes with head-rests. Some of the tombs had

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<sup>51</sup> A.Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord...*, cit., 187.

<sup>52</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 41.

<sup>53</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem...", cit., 234.

<sup>54</sup> A.Mazar, "Iron Age Burial Caves North of the Damascus Gate, Jerusalem" in *Israel Exploration Journal* 26 (1976) 1.

<sup>55</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem...", cit., 234.

<sup>56</sup> A.Kloner, D.Davis, "A Burial Cave of the Late First Temple Period on the Slope of Mount Zion" in H.Geva (red.) *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem 1994, 110.

<sup>57</sup> N.Avigad, "The Tombs in Jerusalem", cit., 714.

<sup>58</sup> W.H.Mare, *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, cit., 115.

<sup>59</sup> E.M.Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine"..., cit., 17.

an additional rear chamber. The burial offerings and bones were collected in repositories shaped as a sunken pit or a small chamber<sup>60</sup> or on the horizontal surfaces prepared for this purpose.

A very popular burial custom was that of placing the offerings in the tombs. "The dead were believed to continue living with benevolent and perhaps malevolent powers, therefore, it is not surprising that the living would want to appease the deceased, including providing nourishment"<sup>61</sup>. The beliefs of the populations who inhabited Jerusalem concerning the afterlife were strictly connected with the burial offerings. Although it was a very common funerary practice, only in a few tombs were special installations for this purpose were prepared. In some of the tombs the trough-niches were adapted for gifts. When the lid was placed on the trough, a rectangular niche was created above, which was used for the placing of funerary gifts. The gifts were placed in the front of the eyes of the dead<sup>62</sup>.

Very often the lamps were placed on the benches near the head of the deceased. Maybe the explanation of this funerary custom can be found in Job 29,3: "his lamp shone over my head, and his light was my guide in the darkness". "Whatever the date of composition, these words may well reflect an earlier practice of lighting the way for the deceased in the nether world as the Lord did for the living on the earth"<sup>63</sup>.

Near the feet of the dead "water decanters" sometimes were found. This pottery is characteristic of the Iron Age II<sup>64</sup>. They indeed may have held water or wine<sup>65</sup>. Domestic pottery in the tombs suggest the belief that it was a new home for the dead one. Sealed jars which contained liquids and the bowls with food represent the belief that the deceased needed to eat and drink after their death<sup>66</sup>. In cave tombs or bench tombs food could have been provided for the living who visited burial places, but provisions in a jar or urn in simple burials is proof that food was placed for the dead. For this purpose, in all burial types throughout the Iron Age II bowls, jars and jugs were used. People believed that the deceased required continued sustenance. In the beginning of Iron Age II in the tombs appeared new ceramic forms, such as plates, storejars, dipper juglets, wine decanters, amphoras, cooking pots and platters. In the daily life they were used for the preparation, storing and serving of foodstuffs, water, wine and other liquids<sup>67</sup>. The various kinds of bottles and juglets could contain perfumes to counteract the chemical processes of decay<sup>68</sup>. The pottery placed in the tombs could be local or imported.

After pottery, jewelry was also a very common burial gift. The deceased were thought to be vulnerable in their new situation, perhaps even more than they had been while alive. People believed that the dead needed sympathetic protective powers. All kind of jewelry served as an appeal to these powers. The meaning of the custom of placing the female figurines into the tombs has not been precisely explained<sup>69</sup>. The Bible says that the men who had a special relationship with God (judges, prophets, kings) were honored after death as having some kinds of power. Maybe also women were thought to be empowered upon death, especially since they could invoke fertility, and the female figurines were the sign of petition.

The family tombs and ancestral tombs served as perpetual claim to the patrimony (sometimes they were located on inherited land). However, in spite of this function of the tombs, we can observe a strong rejection of worshipping of the deceased during the Iron Age II. As we can see in the story about Saul and the witch of En-Dor, who conjured for him the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam. 28,7-25), people had no fear of the dead or the need to overcome it. The reality of the dead is cut off from that of the living<sup>70</sup>. This sharp differentiation is expressed in Psalm 115, 17-18: "The dead

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<sup>60</sup> A.Mazar, *The Archeology of the Land of the Bible*, cit., 520.

<sup>61</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 122.

<sup>62</sup> D.Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan...*, cit., 292.

<sup>63</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem...", cit., 234.

<sup>64</sup> N.Avigad, "Two Hebrew Inscriptions on Wine Jars" in *Israel Exploration Journal* 22 (1972) 1.

<sup>65</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem...", cit., 234.

<sup>66</sup> A.Mazar, *The Archeology of the Land of the Bible*, cit., 525.

<sup>67</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 105-106.

<sup>68</sup> G.Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III"..., cit., 359.

<sup>69</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 141.

<sup>70</sup> L.Y.Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem...", cit., 234.

cannot praise Yahweh, those who sink into silence, but we, the living, shall bless Yahweh, henceforth and for ever". But even if the dead were not worshipped, they (especially judges, prophets, kings and other distinguished individuals) "were thought to possess special powers and to maintain intimate contact with Yahweh as they had during their lifetimes"<sup>71</sup>. Necromancy was forbidden by the law, and whoever transgressed this law had to be stoned to death. It is interesting, that while people were not allowed to consult the dead by mediators, they could to do it directly and they were allowed to feed the deceased. Priests and prophets were considered as persons whose knowledge came directly from God, not from the dead (Lev. 21.1-4,11; Num. 6,6-7; Deut. 18.19-22).

An important question is the location of burial places for common people and for distinguished persons. It seems that the only Iron Age II necropolis for common people was in the Hinnom Valley and Kidron Valley. During this period the burials there were, of course, extramural burials. Royal interments were located inside the city. Other burial places described above belonged to important individuals. The earliest burials were the Silwan tombs, dating from the ninth century B.C.E. The tombs in the Tyropoeon Valley, on Mamilla Street and Suleimann Street are dated to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. As the population of Jerusalem increased, new burial places were designated: in the Hinnom Valley, in the area of St. Etienne's monastery and in the Kidron Valley<sup>72</sup>.

## SUMMARY

Biblia i archeologia okresu Epoki Żelaza II dostarczają nam danych, które uzupełniając się, tworzą mozaikę wyobrażeń i wierzeń dotyczących życia po śmierci wśród ludności jerozolimskiej. Zmarłym przypisuje Biblia miano "istot pozaziemskich" (1 Sam 28,13), "świętych" (Ps 16,3), "wiedzących" (Iz 8,19), natomiast śmierć nazywa "dołączeniem do przodków" (por. Rdz 25,8; 35,29; Lb 20,24; Sdz 2,10). Zmarli otaczani byli cziąg; przykazanie dotyczące czci wobec ojca i matki rozszerzono w interpretacji także na okres pośmiertny. Kontakt ze zmarłymi powodował nieczystość rytualną (por. np. Lb 19,9-19; 31,19; Kpł 21,1-3.11). Nekromancja była zakazana (por. 1 Sam 28). Nekropolie rozmieszczone były poza murami Jerozolimy; jedynie groby królewskie znajdowały się wewnątrz Miasta Dawidowego (wśród biblistów i archeologów trwa dyskusja co do ich lokalizacji). Do największych nekropolii omawianego okresu należą Dolina Cedronu, Dolina Gehenny (te dwie doliny stanowiły nekropolie najuboższej ludności), okolice klasztoru St. Etienne, okolice wioski Silwan. Różnorodność kształtów grobów spowodowana była różnym pochodzeniem społecznym ich właścicieli oraz wpływami kultur ościennych. Zachowało się niewiele inskrypcji nagrobnych, a te, które przetrwały do naszych czasów są niekiedy w dużej mierze zniszczone. Jednak ich treść (jeśli jest możliwa do odczytania) w połączeniu z danymi z wykopalisk dowodzi silnego przekonania o kontynuacji życia po śmierci. Wśród darów ofiarnych składanych w grobach najczęściej pojawiają się naczynia z żywnością, winem i wodą. Miały one stanowić pomoc żywych udzielaną zmarłym u początku ich nowej egzystencji. Lampy stawiane u wezglowia zmarłych stanowiły symbol światłości, która ma ich prowadzić po krainie cieni. Biżuteria miała zyskać przychylność wyższych mocy, z którymi zmarłym przyjdzie się spotkać.

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<sup>71</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 111.

<sup>72</sup> E.Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices...*, cit., 135-139.