2001, pp. 47-58

MARIUSZ ROSIK

BURIAL CUSTOMS IN THE LAND OF BIBLE
FROM THE CHALCOLITHIC PERIOD TO THE HERODIAN PERIOD
(4300 B.C.E.-70 A.D.). GENERAL VIEW

In this paper we describe briefly the burial customs in the land of the Bible from the Chalcolithic period to the Herodian period (4300 B.C.E. - 70 A.D.), 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 population in this period. Through the ages we encounter here a number of burial customs. We show only the main funerary customs concerning the type of tombs, burial offerings or inscriptions. We show that the beliefs of the populations that inhabited the land of the Bible concerning the afterlife are strictly connected with the burial offerings. In each part of the paper we give some examples of actual cemetery, tombs or burial places of each historical period. Describing briefly the results of the excavations in the most important burial places we also show the characteristic features of each of these places. Sometimes it is helpful to recall the biblical quotations.

KEY-WORDS: burial customs, biblical data, beliefs about afterlife, types of tombs

INTRODUCTION

The land of the Bible is often called the land of contrasts. This is true not only because of the geographical environment, but also because of the fact that this small country is a juncture of continents and languages, cultures and crossroads for the nations. It is not surprising that through the ages we encounter here a number of burial customs. In this paper we will show only the main funerary customs concerning the type of tombs, burial offerings or inscriptions. In each part of the paper we will give some examples of actual cemetery, tombs or burial places of each historical period. Describing briefly the results of the excavations in the most important burial places we'll also show the characteristic features of each of these places. Sometimes it will be helpful to recall the Biblical quotations.

THE CHALCOLITHIC PERIOD (CA. 4300-3300 B.C.E.)

During the Chalcolithic period for the first time cemeteries appeared outside settlements. Adeimah is a necropolis 2 km distant from the settlement called Teleilat Ghassul. Archeologists found there three types of tombs. The first is a dolmen which is a table-like tomb, built of three large stone slabs. The second type of tomb is *tumuli* which has a form of circular cairn. The third one is a simple grave dug into the ground, where the bones were put after they were collected (Mazar 1990, 82). This kind of burial in archeology is called secondary burial. First the corpse is laid out until the flesh decomposes, and then the bones are gathered and transferred in the final interment (Gonen 1992, 74).

Another type of tombs was found in Shiqmim (the northern Negev). The shape of these tombs is based on a rounded stone foundation. Because of the differences in diameter of the structure of the tombs (1-3.5 m), some archeologists maintain that there was a hierarchy in the Chalcolithic society. In the southern Sinai fields were found of constructed, circular, stone burial chambers, which probably belonged to pastoralists or copper miners. This burial form dating from the last centuries of the fourth millennium B.C.E. is called in archeology the *nawamis*.

In this period the bones of the dead were also placed in ossuaries and then hidden in the caves (for example in the hill regions at a site near She-

chem, at Mesilat Zion near Jerusalem, and at Umm Qatafa in the Judean Desert). The ossuaries were large enough to contain the skull and long bones of adult (average 70 x 30 x 60 centimeters). They were usually made of coarse clay fired at low temperatures and were modeled by hand. Because of their fragility they could not been transported from afar. Most of them have a form of a rectangular boxes, but some of them take different forms (Gonen 1992, 75). The ossuaries found in the central coastal plain (between Hederah and Azor) are the pottery containers shaped like buildings. Occasionally they have gabled roofs, are decorated with human nose or eyes and sometimes with four small feet which may reflect the fact that houses in the swampy areas were built above their surroundings. Sometimes a panel above the door of the ossuary recalls a panel on the crown from Nahal Mishmar and the violin-shaped panel, stylized female figurines found at the Gilat shrine. There is the possibility that entire facade is intended to represent the gateway to the realm of the dead, guarded by a goddess (Gonen 1992, 76).

Another types of ossuaries have the shape of an animal or the form of a jar. Because both animals and stored foods were part of the domestic needs of the people of this period, maybe the zoomorphic and storejar-shaped ossuaries have been intended to insure the abundance of provisions in the afterlife. In a cave near Mesilat Zion was found an ossuary with a schematic portrayal of a bird in flight, and in a cave at Palmahim archeologists discovered two vessels shaped like birds, probably doves. At Azor, Bene Braq, Ben Shemen, and Palmahim were found the ossuaries in the form of the coverless stone coffer, but in one tomb at Ben Shemen were discovered two large ossuaries from which in one of them were found seven skulls, and in another one the bones those of children. This may indicate unusual circumstances of death (Gonen 1992, 77). Anyway, we can safely conclude that all the decorations of the ossuaries may indicate that people in Chalcolithic period believed in some form of life after death (Mazar 1990, 82-84).

Apart from the decorated ossuaries, the tombs also contained objects (like flint tools) and vessels, mainly the V-shaped bowls, pedestal bowls, various pots and holemouth jars. The tools and vessels were left, according to the belief of the Chalcolithic people, for the use of the deceased (Gonen 1992, 77).

The excavations shows also the practice of burial inside the settlements, mainly below floors of the buildings. This form of burial was predominant during the Neolithic period (ca. 8500-4300). In the Chalcolithic Age under the floors were buried mainly children: in the Beer-sheba sites, at Teleilat Ghassul, in the Nahal Besor settlements. The burials of the children were usually primary, but some excavations shows that during this period the people rarely practiced the primary burial of adults (at Bir Safadi and at Nahal Mishmar). So we may conclude that during the Chalcolithic period prevailed heterogeneous burial customs: outside and inside settlements (Mazar 1990, 82-84); most of them were secondary burials, some of them were primary.

THE EARLY BRONZE AGE (CA. 3300-2300 B.C.E.)

The largest and most important cemeteries of this period were discovered at Bab edh-Dhra, Jericho, Ai, Tell en-Nasbeh, Azor, and Tell el-Far'ah. The practice of secondary burials was abandoned and multiple burials begun. In the same tomb were probably buried the members of the same family or clan. The excavations show that during the Early Bronze Age several generations of one family or tribe could be buried in the same tomb which was artificial or natural cave. The number of burial in one cave ranges from a few individuals to nearly two hundred (Ben-Tor 1992, 88). Of course these tombs do not represent one interment but the continuous use of the cave. This practice of multiple burial is connected with a variety of offerings (for example pottery vessels, weapons or jewelry). In most of excavated sites the skulls were found separated from the bodies. Sometimes the bones were packed in pottery jars (like at Tell Asawir), sometimes the skulls were arranged in rows (like at Jericho), and sometimes archeologists found the evidence of cremation (like at Azor).

A very interesting excavation was made at Bab edh-Dhra. From the Early Bronze IA in the cemetery the tombs in form of caves approached through a vertical shaft were found. These tombs probably belonged to pastoral seminomads, because in each cave there were found six or seven disarticulated skeletons: the skulls laid out in row and the bones – in one pile. There exists the possibility of the strange practice of boiling the flesh to extract it from the bones which then were kept in the temporary graves before final burial in the cemetery. Archeologists found several thousand of these tombs in caves. In the following phase of this period (the Early Bronze IB), when the first permanent

settlement arose at Bab edh-Drha, tombs were built with mud bricks.

In the southern Sinai the pastoral nomads continued to bury the dead in *nawamis* which recall rounded burial structures at Bab edh-Dhra (Mazar 1990, 98-100).

During the Early Bronze II-III multiple interment in caves was a very common practice. This fact would comply with the needs of an urban society. In almost every cave were found many skeletons, pottery vessels, and other objects. Again the excavations at the large cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra show that burial chambers formed in rectangular shapes were used for multiple burials. It is very interesting that pottery found at this cemetery differs from that of the rest of the country. In any other important city in this period (like Arad or Yarmuth) no cemeteries were found. Archeologists suggest that perhaps people were buried far from their settlements, but there is no evidence concerning this hypothesis. As a conclusion we may say that the lack of uniformity in burial customs during the Early Bronze Age suggests the heterogeneous population with some joint characteristics but with variants depending on regions or tribes (Ben-Tor 1992, 88).

THE INTERMEDIATE BRONZE AGE (CA. 2300-2000 B.C.E.)

During the Intermediate Bronze Age each region had its typical type of burial. In the western part of Palestine shaft tombs were known. Shaft tombs were carved in the limestone regions or in the kurkar ridges of the coastal plain. Cemeteries with this kind of tombs were investigated in the Galilean hills, the Hulleh Valley, the Jezreel Valley, The Jordan Valley, The Beth Shean Valley, the Coastal plain, the Judean Hills and Ramot Menashe. This type of tomb, considered one of the characteristic features of Intermediate Bronze Age culture (Gophna 1992, 139), is a rock-cut vertical shaft which leads to underground burial chambers. Some of the shafts are circular, as those near Ain Samiya where one or two burial chambers lead into shafts which descend to depths of 6 m. Others are either square or irregular. At Lachish the shaft is shallow and the cave rather small. At Megiddo the shaft is elaborate and square and the cave has several rectangular rooms. In these caves were found a single or a few articulated or disarticulated skeletons with pottery vessels or copper weapons. Some of the shaft tombs served for entire families (at Enan), but many of them were used for individual burials. Because of the variations between cemeteries in the settlements not distant one from another it is possibility that related tribal groups with different burial customs lived side by side (Mazar 1990, 160-161).

Apart of shaft tombs we encounter during the Intermediate Bronze Age also the megalithic tombs. These tombs were built of large, unworked boulders, often covered by mounds of earth or stone piles. There are two types of megalithic tombs: stone or earthen tumuli, and dolmens (Gophna 1992, 141).

In the Golan Heights and Upper Galilee (near Chorazin, near Mount Meron and Alma) were excavated megalithic dolmens covered by tumuli. There are „tablelike structures composed of two or more vertical basalt blocks roofed by large rock slabs. A heap of stones usually covered the dolmens, creating a tumulus" (Mazar 1990, 162). The average size of dolmen stones can be 0.9 x 0.7 x 4 meters, and the simple dolmens may be constructed of six large slabs. After their construction the dolmens were repeatedly reused. Excavations in dolmen fields of the Golan allows to date the construction of a great part of the dolmens to the late third millennium (Gophna 1992, 142). These dolmens were used mainly for the secondary burial of one person. Alongside the dead were placed weapons, bracelets, beads, and pottery.

For the central Negev built-up tumuli, circular cairns with inner cell prepared for placing the body are typical. Usually „the stone coffin was covered with flat stone and encircled by a ring of stones. The space between the outer stone circle and the cist was filled with stones, thus creating a tumulus 0.5 - 1.5 meters high" (Gophna 1992, 141). There were found some gifts with the skeletons: pottery, copper artifacts, beads. This type of tombs associated with the settlements were built on summits of mountain ridge or sometimes inside the settlements, between houses. In this case, after primary burial, the bones had been probably removed for secondary interment. Tumuli were found in the Transjordanian plateau, in the basalt regions of the Hauran and Golan, in the Jordan Valley, at Chorazin in the Upper Galilee, and at Bab edh-Dhra.

All types of tombs of the Intermediate Bronze Age, shaft tombs, megalithic dolmens and tumuli, served both for primary and secondary burials and are interments of one or a few individuals. It shows the social structure and way of life in societies of this period. Seminomadic societies practiced the individual and secondary interments, while an urban societies used the form of multiple burials (Mazar 1990, 159).

THE MIDDLE BRONZE II AGE (CA. 2000-1550 B.C.E.)

In this period again returned the practice of multiple burials in caves, especially in urban societies because families wanted to bury their dead in the same place, sometimes over several generations. We can observe this burial custom at Jericho where dozens of rich burial caves were excavated. In the center of the cave there was a wooden bed for the corpse. When it was necessary to bury in the same place, older burials were pushed to the sides. The most frequent burial gifts which were found in this period are pottery vessels, sometimes with food remains, wooden containers, weapons, tools, jewelry and seals. At Jericho were preserved also some organic materials, wooden beds and stools.

One of the principal burial sites of Jerusalem is the „Dominus Flevit", located, according to the general practice of ancient Palestinian sites, outside the fortified town. This cemetery is the largest and perhaps the oldest burial place of Jerusalem and was used for the interments continuously down to our times. The „Dominus Flevit" excavations unearthed the Jebusite burial place which has a bilobate shape. This type of tombs is known from Fara, Gaza and Lachish (Saller 1964, 7). The bilobate tomb on the west slope of the Mount of Olives contains many artifacts: the number of alabastra and two scarabs (probably from sixteenth century B.C.E.), vases, cylindrical juglet, small painted jars and bowls, jugs,

dippers, ring-base ware, goblets or pedestal vases, lamps, and objects made of bone and metal. The cylindrical juglet found here was also found at all places where the bilobate tombs were discovered and is characteristic of the Hyksos period. Because of this the bilobate tombs are sometimes called Hyksos tombs. Some of the objects found on the Mount of Olives point to the Middle Bronze Age, others are later (from the Late Bronze period) because the bilobate tomb of „Dominus Flevit" was used as a burial place for about three hundred years (Mare 1987, 44-56).

Excavations at Megiddo show another burial practice of the Middle Bronze Age – the tombs were built beneath houses inside the settlement. Archeologists observed similar practices at Hazor, where a long tunnel was cut in the rock below the large building and at the end of the tunnel some chambers were uncovered. There was probably a place for tombs of the members of royalty.

A strange but common practice of interment was that of infants in pottery jars, which were deliberately broken in the upper part and with gifts (ointment juglets and jewelry) were placed under the floors of rooms and courtyards. This form of burial, which did not continue in the Late Bronze Age, may reflect a high rate of infant mortality (Mazar 1990, 213-214).

THE LATE BRONZE AGE (CA. 1550-1200 B.C.E.)

During the Late Bronze Age two main types of tombs predominated: burial caves and pit graves. In all Canaan in this period for multiple burials natural or artificial caves were used. People continued the custom from the Middle Bronze Age of pushing the bones of earlier burials toward the sides of the cave and thus lining the walls with bone heaps and offerings. Because of this practice it is very difficult to discover the number of interments in each cave. The largest caves could contain the bones of hundreds of people and numerous domestic pottery vessels (cooking pots, kraters, store jars, jugs, juglets, and bowls), weapons, jewelry, seals, and other precious objects. The lack of special burial vessels and a great number of domestic pottery suggests a belief that the tomb was a new home for the dead (Gonen 1992, 241). In the coastal and northern plains of Canaan people used to bury in simple dug-out tombs prepared for individual burials. Sometimes in tombs of this type were found

Mycenaean and Cypriot objects (at Acre) suggesting that tombs belonged to rich merchants or highly ranked people. More elaborate tombs were excavated in the eastern Jordan Valley (at Tell es-Saidiyeh) shaped as boxes made of bricks and containing objects from the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of twelfth century B.C.E. (Mazar 1992, 277). During this period many of Middle Bronze Age cave tombs were reused (for example at Safed, Hanita, Damun in the Carmel, Beth Shean or Megiddo).

Excavations also show that in the thirteenth century B.C.E. anthropoid coffins were used which can be related to Egyptian officials or troops. In this period the Egyptian presence was intensified in Canaan. In Deir el-Balah and Beth-Shean were found anthropoid coffins the lids of which were shaped in the form of human head and upper torso. The coffins represent the Egyptian world of beliefs concerning the needs of the deceased. There were found the lotus flowers on the forehead, the

emblems of the Egyptian god of the dead, osiris, held in the hands. Undoubtedly this burial custom is inspired by Egyptian prototypes but we can find a lot of original features, far removed from the Egyptian coffins. For example sometimes we can observe the departure from the Egyptian practice of separate interment for each person (Gonen 1992, 244). The tombs with coffins contained a wealth of gifts: Egyptian, Aegean and local pottery, gold, carnelian, alabaster or bronze vessels, seals, ushabti figurines (which were symbolic representations of the servant of the deceased), and funeral stelae. The human face on the coffins at Deir el-Balah were made in the grotesque style, while those of Beth-Shean in a more naturalistic style. Sometimes the coffins were inscribed (like that found in Lachish with an Egyptian hieratic inscription). To whom did the tombs containing the coffins belonge? Perhaps some of the deceased were Egyptian officials or army officers, other were mercenaries of foreign origin, but the coffins were possibly prepared by local artisans. Of course there were also found many simple poor graves from this period, belonging probably to ordinary soldiers or to Canaanites. These graves were just dug into the ground (Mazar 1990, 284-285).

During the Late Bronze Age there is found not only Egyptian influence on burial customs in Canaan but also Greek and Indo-European influence. At Gezer and Acre were found the pottery containers for bones known in Mycenaean culture. In the Amman square building probably was discovered the sole evidence for the practice of cremation in this period. In this building excavators found quantities of burnt human bones, both of children and of adults. If we reject the opinion that the building was a temple where child sacrifices were practiced or that it was a religious center for a tribal league in Transjordan, or that it was a „fire temple" of Iranian type or simple residence, the only possibility is to locate here a mortuary used for cremation. Because cremation was unknown among the Canaanites, perhaps the settlement belonged to the Hittites who practiced this burial custom (Mazar 1990, 284-285).

The coastal population buried their dead in rectangular pits excavated in the sand or the kurkar rock. This type of tombs was prepared for solitary burials. The graves were never reopened. We can notice also in this practice the Egyptian influence on the outlook on death and burial, because earlier a multiple burial was a very common practice. This influence was strong especially in the Coastal Plain, where main international routes passed. The people of the hill regions were not influenced by the Egyptians. The largest pit burials were excavated at Tell el-Ajjul, Tell Ridan and Deir el-Balah in the Gaza strip, and at Horvat Humra and Palmahim on the banks of Nahal Sorek. Among the offerings in the burial pits (pottery, also imported, beads and jewelry, weapons, metal pins) there were the sealed jars which contained liquids and the bowls food. This custom without doubt is connected to religious beliefs (Gonen 1992, 242).

At Tell el-Ajjul, Lachish and Megiddo the niche tombs were found. The niches were cut into the walls where the dead were laid. The discovery from Tell el-Ajjul is very interesting. It is called „horse and loculi" because some tombs contain the skeleton of a horse placed in the center of the tomb. At Lachish a jawbone of a horse was also found. The meaning of this custom is not clear (Gonen 1992, 242-243).

In Canaan there were also discovered adult burials in store jars (at Kfar Yehoshua, Tel Zeror, Tell el-Far'ah, and Azor). This type of burials was common in the Hittite kingdom, thus there is a possibility that the bearers of this custom of the twelfth century may have been refugees from the Hittite Empire (Gonen 1992, 244).

Archeologists found two cases of built tombs: at Tel Dan and Aphek. Inside the small chamber at Dan were identified 40 individuals, adults and children. The remains were accompanied by pottery vessels (among them a group of Mycenaean imports with chariot vase), weapons, gold plaques and earrings, ivory and bronze objects, and basalt artifacts. The tomb with niches belonged to the fourteenth and thirteenth century B.C.E.

A seminomadic population used to bury their dead in the same way as in the preceding period. For example at Tell el-Ajjul a large cemetery from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries was discovered. There was no significant settlement in this area during this period, so probably the cemetery belonged to the nomads (Mazar 1992, 278-279). Similar burial caves which are not adjacent to any settlement site were discovered at Gibeon, Safed, Hebron, Jedur, and Hanita.

Burials inside urban settlements were very rare during the Late Bronze Age. Several exceptions are tombs excavated at Megiddo, Dan, and Aphek which were probably royal tombs. At Dan and Aphek is possible that there was a Mycenaean inspiration, because of the abundance of Mycenaean pottery found there.

As we can see in a small country we find a great multiplicity of burial customs. This fact may suggest that

there was a number of population groups existing in Palestine in the Late Bronze Age. The only distinction that we may make is that in the coastal plain occurred mainly burials of individuals, while multiple burials appear in the Shephelah and the hill country. Maybe this distinction is reflected in the Bible which denotes the population of the plain as Canaanite, while that of the hill country as Amorite (Mazar 1992, 278).

THE IRON AGE (CA. 1200-586)

In the necropolises at Azor and at Tel Zezor three types of tombs were found: the first is the simple grave dug into the ground, the second is shaped as rectangular cist, and the third is the kind of coffin „created by breaking the necks of and joining two large storage jars" (Mazar 1990, 326-327). The cemetery at Tell el-Far'ah in the northern Negev was the Philistine cemetery (like that at Azor) and contained the simple graves and burial caves. The caves, probably belonging to the aristocratic families, were hewn in the bedrock. There were also found chamber tombs which included a stepped corridors (called *dromos*) and a burial chamber with wide benches. Chamber tombs were used by the Philistines during the twelfth and eleventh centuries. This type of tombs was found for example at Tel Eitun in the inner Shephelah. In this cemetery the caves are oval, with wide benches on which the bodies were placed (Mazar 1992, 280). The source of the carved burial chambers might be the influence of Aegean culture or Egyptian culture. There is no clear evidence about this. In chamber tombs at Tell el-Far'ah were discovered two coffins with pottery. Coffins were also found at Beth-Shean, and the decorations on these coffins recall the headdress of the Sea Peoples (Mazar 1990, 326-327). Maybe the Sea People serving in Egyptian army garrisoned in Philistia (Mazar 1992, 279).

The Israelites inherited from the Canaanites the custom of burying in family burial caves which were a deliberate shaping of rock-hewn tombs, usually square rooms with a small opening closed by a large stone. Benches on three sides of the chamber had a space for three bodies. Sometimes the tombs had also a rear chamber. To prepare the space for more recent burials all the gifts and bones had to be collected in a sunken pit or a small side chamber. The burial caves of Judah recall the „four-room house" and surely demonstrate the belief in a life after death. This practice concerned, of course, secondary burial. In the Bible we find clear distinction between primary and secondary burial. This is probably implied in the words of Jeremiah: „They shall not be mourned, or gathered and buried" (Jer. 25, 33). Also biblical phrases like „gathered to his kin" (Gen. 49, 29) or „gathered to his fathers" (II Kings 22, 20) seem to mention the secondary burials (Barkay 1992, 359).

Around Jerusalem several cemeteries were excavated and each has its own characteristics. Israelite practice was to place the burial places near the cities, but outside the town walls. The exceptions were the tombs of the kings, because they were inside the City of David (I Kings 2, 10; Neh. 3, 16). A variety of forms for tombs was caused by the heterogeneous population, social hierarchy, and foreign influence. In the area of St. Etienne monastery (Fig. 1) two very large caves were discovered which included a central hall surrounded by several rectangular benched rooms. Each room consisted of three benches with special headrests and repositories for collecting the bones. The headrests were cut from the rock and were rarely found out-
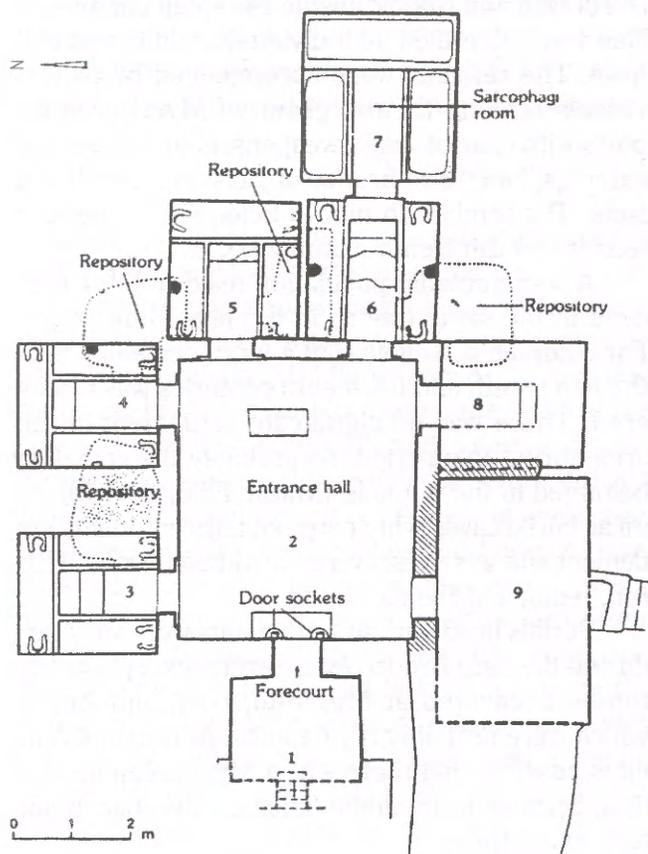

Fig. 1. Monastery of St. Etienne, burial cave 1

side Jerusalem, while they were found in most cemeteries in the city. There is a possibility that there were two caves in St. Etienne cemetery which served as a burial place for the last kings of Judah.

There is a discussion among historians and archeologists about where royal burial sites are found. I Kings says that David (I Kings 2, 10), Solomon (I Kings 11, 43) and their successors were buried in the City of David. II Chronicles says that Hezekiah was buried on the same hill where the tombs of David's descendants are (II Chron. 32, 33). Jehoram and Judah were not buried in the tombs of the kings, but in the City of David (II Chron. 21, 20; 24, 25). Similarly, Uzziah was buried in the City of David in a field for royal tombs (II Kings 15, 7; II Chron. 26, 23). Manasseh was buried in his palace garden (II Kings 21, 18; II Chron. 33, 20). His son's tomb (Amon) is in the same place (II Kings 21, 26). 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 (Mare 1987, 113-115).

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; (Mazar 1990, 521-522).

In the cemetery west of the present city walls of Jerusalem possibly royal Israelite remains were found. They included pottery, a „pillar of Astarte", lamps, and the water decanter. Lamps were placed near the head of the skeleton and the water decanter at the feet (Mare 1987, 117).

Phoenician influence in Jerusalem expresses also rock-cut tombs on the west slope of the Tyropoeon Valley (southwest corner of the Temple Mount).These tombs may have belonged to the aristocratic families. 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 (Rahmani 1994, 31-33)and was formed with a square or rectangular shape. Some of the pottery found there dating to the eight century B.C.E. have the inscriptions with personal names in the Hebrew script of the time of the monarchy (Mare 1987, 115-117). All the caves were probably cleared of burials before the expansion of the city westward.

The cemetery in the Siloam (Silwan) village consisted of cliff-hewn elaborate tombs. Some of them were freestanding monolithic chambers and probably belonged to important persons in the city. The book of Isaiah may describe this type of the tomb (Isa 22,16). The owner of this tomb was the official Shebna who during his lifetime, prepared
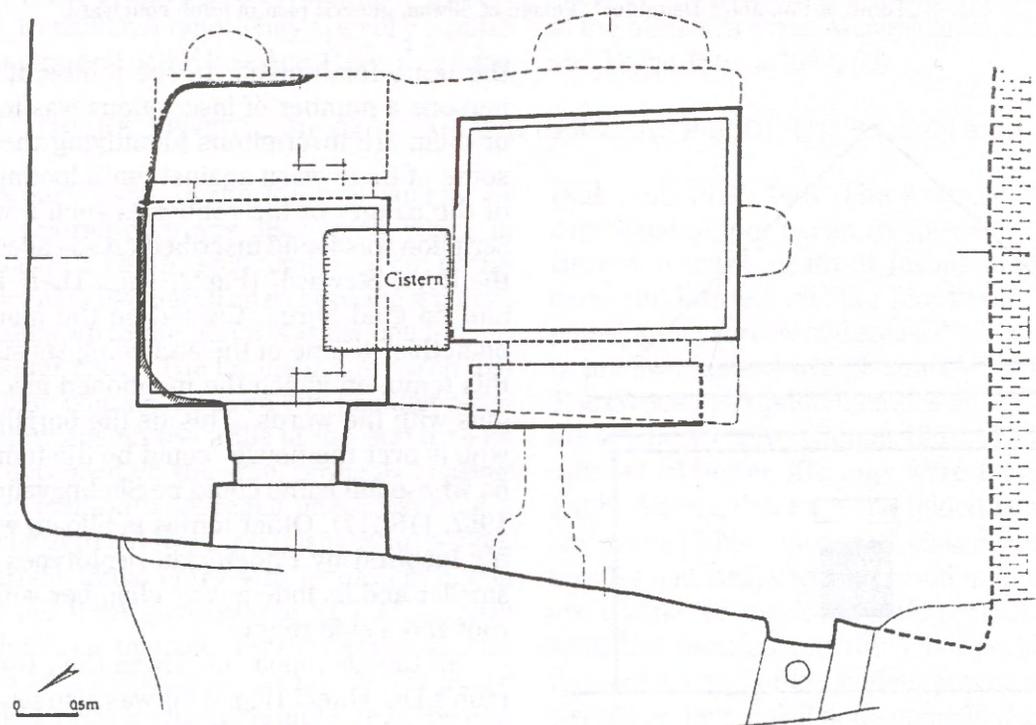

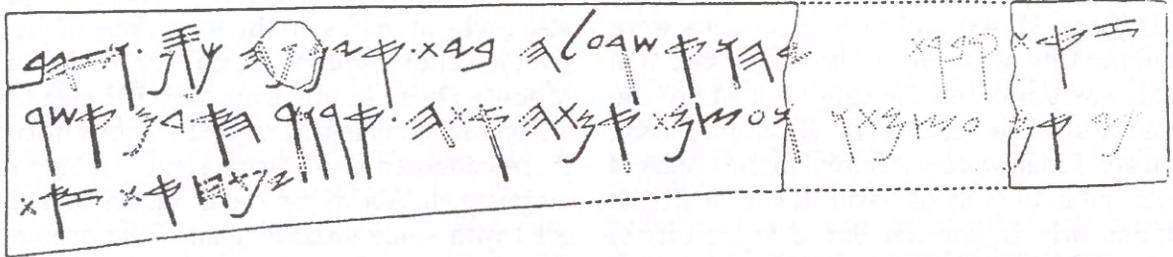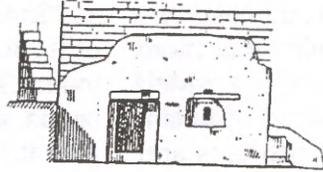Fig. 2. „Tomb of the Royal Steward", Village of Silwan, plan

Fig. 3. „Tomb of the Royal Steward", façade and facsimile of the inscription
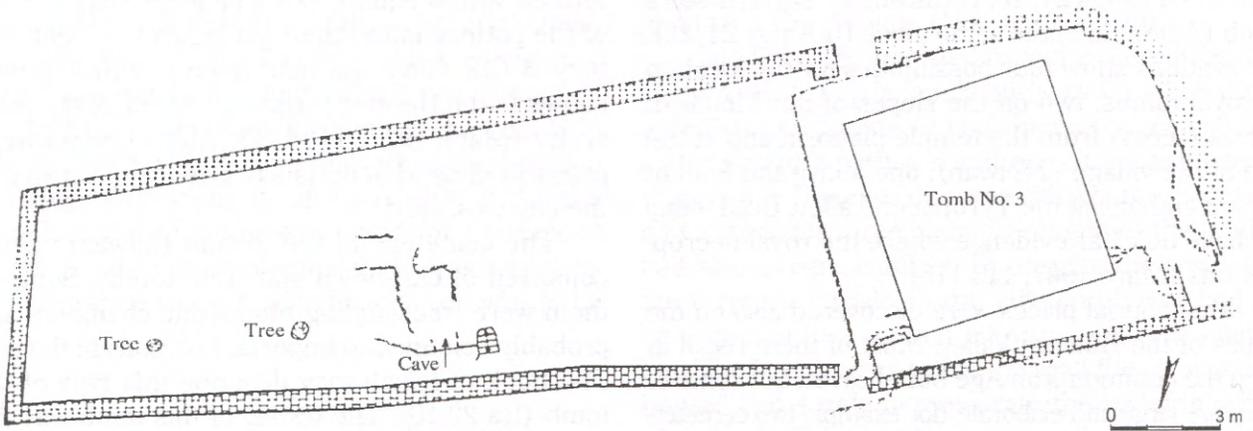

Fig. 4. „Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter", Village of Silwan, general plan of tomb courtyard
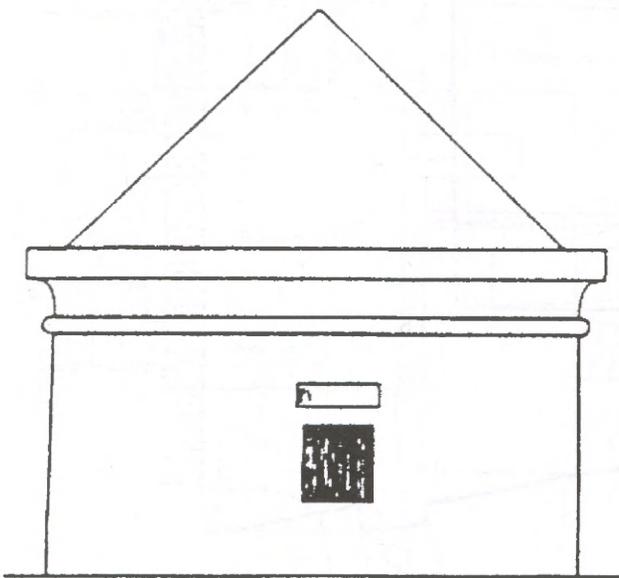

Fig. 2. „Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter",
reconstruction of the façade

the tomb for himself. In the tombs of important persons a number of inscriptions was found. Most of them are inscriptions identifying the dead, but some of them warn against tomb looting. Because of the danger of the robberies such a warning inscription was found inscribed on so-called „Tomb of the Royal Steward" (Fig. 2, 3): „...There is no silver and no gold here... Cursed be the man who will open this" (Some of the archeologists suggest that this tomb, on which the mentioned inscription begins with the words „This (is the burial) of ...yahu who is over the house" could be the tomb of Shebna whose full name could be Shebnayahu; cf. Mare 1987, 116-117). Other tombs in Siloam were probably inspired by Phoenician prototypes. They are smaller and include a cave chamber with a gabled roof and a side room.

In the necropolis of Silwan the „Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter" (Fig. 4, 5) was also found. 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. In the layer of earth covering the roof remains of the base of the pyramid were found.

The 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). Elsewhere 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 (Mare 1987, 117).

Among the offerings and gifts found in Israelite burials are pottery vessels with food and drink, oil lamps, seals, weapons, jewelry, and other objects. Some of the bottles or jaglets probably contained perfumes to counteract the chemical processes of decay and to make possible reentry into the tomb for further burial. The profusion of the offerings in this period reflects a strong belief in an afterlife (Mazar 1990, 524-525). During the Iron Age II-III almost all the burials were exposed; the dead were not covered with earth or placed in a coffin like during earlier periods (Barkay 1992, 359).

THE PERSIAN PERIOD (586-332 B.C.E.)

The main burial places from this period were discovered at Hazor, Khirbet Ibsan, En ha-Nasiv, Akhziv, Carmel, Atlit, Dor, Makmish, Azor, and Gezer. The tombs of the Persian period can be subdivided into shaft tombs and cist tombs. Archeologists encountered a number of different types of shaft tombs. Some of them have vertical shaft, others have a sloping stepped dromus. The cist tombs are rectangular, cut in the ground or in rock. The walls, covers and floors of these tombs are built of stone slabs or of brick. Sometimes other burials from this period have also been found: pit graves and burials in anthropoid sarcophagi or monumental tombs. During the sixth century a very common type of tomb was a transitional type. They are very similar to those from the end of the Iron Age. Often they have

a burial chamber with shelves along the walls. Usually they contain local vessels (Stern 1982, 91-92).

In the cemetery excavated at Atlit all the burials were in shaft graves. The central shaft was four-five meters deep. After the initial burial, the shaft was blocked by a stone slab. The floors of the burial room usually contained one, two, or even three pits. In each of the pits was laid one body. Only one tomb in this cemetery was preserved with all funerary gifts. Among them were found four jars which stood in each corner and coins from the fifth and the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. There are many tombs from the Persian period in the land of the Bible which bear close resemblance to the burials in Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Cyprus and Egypt (Stern 1982, 68).

THE HELLENISTIC, HASMONEAN AND HERODIAN PERIOD (332 B.C.E.-70 A.D.)

In February 1956, in the Rehavia quarter of Jerusalem, a burial cave was discovered, which is called the Jason's Tomb. This tomb was cut in the rock and included two burial chambers and a porch. A court leading up to the porch was divided into an outer and inner court. The facade of the porch displayed a single column between two flanking pilasters. The drawings on the walls of the porch show one of the deceased on the ship, probably chasing a merchant. The tomb belonged undoubtedly to a wealthy Jerusalem family of the Hasmonean period. During Herod's initial entry into Jerusalem it was plundered and then (probably in 31 B.C.E.), was destroyed by an earthquake. Very important are the graffiti on one of the walls of the porch. There are Aramaic and Greek inscriptions and one of the oldest representations of the seven-branched menorah

(Rahmani 1967, 100). The Aramaic inscription is composed of four parts: an appeal to the visitor to lament over the death of Jason, an appeal to the deceased himself wishing him peace, a scribe expressing the sorrow of deceased's friends, and finally his own lament over Jason (Avigad 1967, 105). The Greek inscription includes an appeal to joy for those who are alive (Benoit 1967, 112-113). A great number of burial offerings were found inside the tomb. Among them are the folded lamps from the end of the Hellenistic period, closed lamps with long nozzles and lamps with decoration in relief (which are typical for the Hellenistic period), lamps with spatulate nozzle from Herodian period, different types of bowls, bottles, juglets, jars or cooking pots, also rings, knifes and bone utensils (Rahmani 1967, 75-90). In Jason's Tomb also the collection of

fifty-five coins was found belonging to the period of the procurators (only one coin belonged to the time of Alexander Janneus, 103-76 B.C.E.; cf. Hachlili, Killebrew 1983A, 151).

At Jericho approximately fifty rock-hewn tombs dating from the Second Temple have been excavated. These tombs contained both primary and secondary burials and served as the family tombs. They consisted of a square burial room and often of a pit dug into the floor the edge of which formed three or four benches. Into the walls were hewn one, two or three loculi (*kokhim*; Hachlili, Killebrew 1983B, 109-110). In one of the monumental tombs was discovered a decoration depicting a vine trellis and grapes with birds. This is unusual, because the rock-cut tombs of this period were not known to have a wall painting (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983B, 113). Excavations at Jericho, as was mentioned above, showed two main burial types: primary and secondary burial. Primary burial were in the wooden coffins which were placed in the loculi tombs. The deceased were brought to the burial places inside the coffins. Sometimes inside the coffins near the head or feet of the deseased some personal objects were placed. On the floor or in the pit of the tomb objects of daily use were often placed. Among them were found cooking pots, lamps, bottles or juglets. Outside the entrance of the tomb the storage jars were placed. For secondary burials, ossuaries or tombs with collected bones were used. The ossuaries formed in the shape of a small rectangular box, were hewn from a block of limestone. Usually they were decorated, but animals or human figures never appear in the decorations. Apart from wooden ossuaries only a few pottery ossuaries were discovered at Jericho. Close to the ossuaries were discovered some burial gifts: bowls, Herodian lamps, unguentaria or cooking pots. Inscriptions on the ossuaries were incised or written, usually included the name of the dead, and several were written both in Jewish and Greek script. At Jericho the tombs with secondary burials without any traces of coffins or ossuaries were also discovered. Inside such tombs were found piles of collected bones (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983B, 116-124). Also three unusual practices were found during the excavations. In one tomb the bones were transferred into a loculus after they had been taken out of the ossuaries. In another tomb the pit was filled with the bones of children and then plastered over. The third unusual practice was discovered in the monumental tomb with twenty-two ossuaries: the bone were collected into heaps and then were laid into a pit dug for them (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983B, 124).

A very interesting question is whether the coins-on-eyes custom was a common practice during this period. Four coins were found in two tombs at Jericho. In tomb D/18 from the second half of the first century (which consisted of a central chamber with seven loculi with a wooden coffin), two coins were found. One of them is the coin of Yehohanan Hyrcanus II (63-40 B.C.E.). It was found at the entrance to the tomb. The second one is a bronze coin of Herod Archelaus (4 B.C.E.-6 A.D.) which was found in a damaged skull. In tomb D/3 two bronze coins of Agrippa I (37-44 A.D.) were discovered, both in the skull. Only three of these four coins were placed intentionally inside the tomb, but probably in the mouth, not on the eyes. This is perhaps a result of a pagan Greek custom. Greeks placed the coins in the mouth of the deceased as a payment to Charon who carried the spirits of the dead across the River Styx to Tartarus. This belief is, of course, derived from mythology. However, as excavations show, the practice of placing coins on the eyes or in the mouth was very rare during the Second Temple period (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983A, 152).

In 1953 theabove-mentioned unknown cemetery was discovered, which now is called „Dominus Flevit", on the Mount of Olives (Bagatti, Milik 1958, 2-4). A great number of tombs of various types was found. In the *kokhim* the dead were buried in oven-shaped shafts. Later their bones were collected in ossuaries to make space for others. This type of ossuaries (made of stones or wood) was evidently used in Jerusalem until 70 A.D. In the inscriptions on the ossuaries many biblical names appear such as Mary, Salome, Sapphira, Simeon or Jonah. The inscriptions are in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Hebrew language is that of the Mishnaic period (Bagatti, Milik 1958, 105). Near the „Dominus Flevit" cemetery the tombs of Herod's family (on Mount Scopus) were excavated. The inscriptions on the ossuaries give us some informations about the history of Jerusalem. One of the inscriptions refers to the donor of the copper gates of the inner court of the temple. Here was also excavated the skeleton of a Jew who had been crucified. The heel bones of the dead were still fixed to a wooden piece (Bagatti, Milik 1958, 109). Christian tradition locates the tomb of Lazarus (John 11,1.18; 12,1) in the village of Bethany. Excavations show that the village was occupied from the sixth century B.C.E. to the fourteenth century A.D. Artifacts from the time of Jesus

were found there in the tombs. Among them are clay lamps, other vessels, coins and other objects (Bagatti, Milik 1958, 199-200).

An interesting question is the location of Calvary. There are different views about the location of Calvary and the tomb of Jesus, but the most probable location is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Bible says that Calvary was called the place of the skull (Matt. 27,33; Mk 15,22: Luke 23,33; John 19,17). Excavations in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher uncovered a mound of gray rock with a skull-like appearance because of two small caves, which the mound contained. This place was outside the city walls during the time of Christ and was included within the walled city during the time of Herod Agrippa (Bagatti, Milik 1958, 185-187).

One of the most usual places for burials in the first century B.C.E. and the first century A.D. was the Kidron Valley. From this time four important tombs were discovered: the so-called tomb of James with a Doric-style columned entrance, the tomb of Zechariah with a pyramid top cut out of the rock, the tomb of Absalom cut out of the cliff, and the tomb of Jehoshaphat reached by a flight of stairs (Bagatti, Milik 1958, 193-196).

At Qumran a large Jewish cemetery was excavated that consisted of simple graves dug into the earth (at depths between 1.20 to 2.00 meters) containing primary burials. In the main cemetery only male burials were found (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983B, 126). There were found several sherds and a few ornaments, but apart from this the burials were empty of artifacts (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983 A, 152).

We can conclude that in the first century B.C.E. and the first century A.D. there existed the practice of primary burials in coffins and secondary burials in ossuaries. This is a characteristic feature of funerary customs during this period and differs from earlier and later burial customs in the land of the Bible (Hachlili, Killebrew 1983B, 125).

CONCLUSION

1. *The types of the tombs.* In the land of the Bible we encounter a number of types of tombs and a variety of burial customs from the Chalcolithic Period to the Herodian Period (4300 B.C.E.-70 A.D.). In the Chalcolithic Period three types of tombs were used: dolmens, tumuli and simple graves dug into the ground. People practiced both primary and secondary burials, inside and outside settlements. There are known also interments in ossuaries from this period. During the Early Bronze Age the practice of multiple burials was known. The tombs were mainly in caves. The nomadic populations would to bury their dead in *nawamis*. From this period we have also some evidence of cremation and of the practice of boiling the flesh to extract it from bones. During the Intermediate Bronze Age almost every region had its typical type of burial. There are known the shaft-tombs and the megalithic tombs (tumuli and dolmens). Urban societies practiced mainly multiple burials. Tombs inside settlements were excavated. Seminomadic societies practiced individual and secondary burials. The multiple burial is a characteristic feature of the Middle Bronze Age. Two types of tombs were dominant during this period: tombs in caves and bilobate tombs. Sometimes infants were buried in pottery jars. During the Late Bronze Age we encounter a multiplicity of burial customs. The burial caves (natural or artificial) and the pit graves were used.

There are known also niche tombs from this period. People used anthropoid coffins, but sometimes they buried adults in store jars. A common practice was individual, solitary burial, but in the Shephelah and hill country multiple burials were practiced. Archeologists found also evidence of cremation practiced, probably by the Hittites. From the Iron Age three types of tombs are known: simple tombs dug into the ground, tombs shaped as rectangular cists and a kind of coffin made from two large storage jars. Tombs in caves from this period are formed like „four-room houses". The rock-cut tombs, chamber tombs, were used like family tombs. During the Persian Period many types of shaft tombs and cist tombs were used. The cist tombs were dug in the ground or cut in the rock. Sometimes the burial in anthropoid sarcophagi were practiced. During the Hellenistic Period and the Second Temple Period a variety of burial customs was practiced. Shaft tombs, rock-hewn tombs, caves and tumuli were used. In the first century B.C.E. and the first century A.D., for the primary burials, coffins were used and for the secondary burials ossuaries.

2. *The burial gifts.* The most common of funerary offerings from Chalcolithic Period to the Herodian Period are all types of pottery vessels (pots, jars, bowls, jugs, juglets), weapons and jewelry. The tombs often contained tools, seals and

lamps. Sometimes the pottery vessels were filled with food or liquids. During the Late Bronze Age and later the burial gifts in the land of the Bible were influenced by the culture of the neighboring countries. Archeologists found for example Mycenaean, Cypriot, Egyptian and Aegean objects. In the Iron Age tombs were found vessels which at the time of burial were filled with perfumes to counteract the process of decay of the body. Sometimes there were found also some coins inside the tombs, but it was not a common practice in the land of the Bible.

3. *Beliefs*. The beliefs of the populations that inhabited the land of the Bible concerning the afterlife are strictly connected with the burial offerings.

The tools and vessels were placed inside the tombs for the use of the deceased. Domestic pottery in the tombs suggest a belief that it is a new home for the dead person. Sealed jars which contained liquids and bowls with food represents the belief that the deceased need to eat and drink after their death. Lamps which were placed mainly near the head of dead the had to light the way to a new dimension of life. The coins placed in the mouth of the dead had to be a payment to Charon for crossing the River Styx on the way to Tartarus. There were also discovered tombs with „nephes" which symbolizes the spirit of the dead. Also the content of the inscriptions recalls convictions about life after death.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Avigad N.
  1967   *Aramaic Inscriptions in the Tomb of Jason*, „Israel Exploration Journal", 17.
Bagatti P.B., Milik J.T.
  1958   *Gli Scavi del Dominus Flevit*, Gerusalemme.
Barkay G.
  1992   *The Iron Age II-III*, (in:) A.Ben-Tor (red.), *The Archeology of Ancient Israel*, New Haven-London.
Ben-Tor A.
  1992   *The Early Bronze Age*, (in:) A.Ben-Tor (red.), *The Archeology of Ancient Israel*, New Haven-London.
Benoit P.
  1967   *L'Inscription grecque du tombeau de Jason*, „Israel Exploration Journal" 17.
Gonen R.
  1992   *The Chalcolithic Period*, (in:) A. Ben-Tor (red.), *The Archeology of Ancient Israel*, New Haven-London.
Gophna R.
  1992   *The Intermediate Bronze Age*, (in:) A.Ben-Tor (red.), *The Archeology of Ancient Israel*, New Haven-London.

Hachlili R., Killebrew A.
  1983a   *Was the Coin-on-Eye Custom a Jewish Burial Practice in the Second Temple Period?*, „Biblical Archeologist", 46.
  1983b   *Jewish Funerary Customs During the Second Temple Period, in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis*, „Palestine Exploration Quarterly", 115.
Mare W.H.
  1987   *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
Mazar A.
  1990   *The Archeology of the Land of the Bible*, New York.
  1992   *The Iron Age I*, (in:) A.Ben-Tor (red.), *The Archeology of Ancient Israel*, New Haven-London.
Rahmani L.Y.
  1967   *Jason's Tomb*, „Israel Exploration Journal" 17.
  1994   *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*, Jerusalem.
Saller E.S.J.
  1964   *The Jebusite Burial Place*, Jerusalem.
Stern E.
  1982   *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 583-332 B.C.*, Warminster.

Adres autora:
  Ks. dr Mariusz Rosik
  Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu
  Pl. Katedralny 14
  50-329 Wrocław