

## Section D: Maccabees and Hasmoneans (167- 40 BC, Revolt & Independence)

Judas Maccabaeus took control of Jerusalem from the Seleucid Empire in 164 BC. He cleansed the temple and began to rebuild the city and its defenses that same year.

In 160 BC Demetrius, King of the Seleucid Empire, gave Jonathan Maccabaeus a letter which promoted him, authorized him to raise an army and manufacture weapons, and stated that he was considered an ally of the Seleucid Empire. The letter also ordered the release of the Jewish hostages held by Seleucid troops in the fortress called the Acra, which sat to the south of the south wall of Solomon's Temple Mount, attached to the Temple Mount wall. The Acra had been used as a stronghold against the Jews during the entire Maccabean Revolt.

*Jonathan went straight to Jerusalem and read the letter in the hearing of the whole people and of the men in the Citadel (Acra). They were terrified when they heard that the king had given him authority to raise an army. The men in the Citadel surrendered the hostages to Jonathan, who handed them back to their parents. Jonathan then took up residence in Jerusalem and began the rebuilding and restoration of the city. He ordered those responsible for the work to build the walls and the defenses around Mount Zion of squared stone blocks to make them stronger, and this was done.* - 1 Maccabees 10:7-11

*Jonathan, on his return, called a meeting of the elders of the people and decided with them to build fortresses in Judaea and to heighten the walls of Jerusalem and erect a high barrier between the Citadel and the city, to cut the former off from the city and isolate it, to prevent the occupants from buying or selling. Rebuilding the city was a co-operative effort: part of the wall over the eastern ravine had fallen down; he restored the quarter called Chaphenatha.* - 1 Maccabees 12:35-37

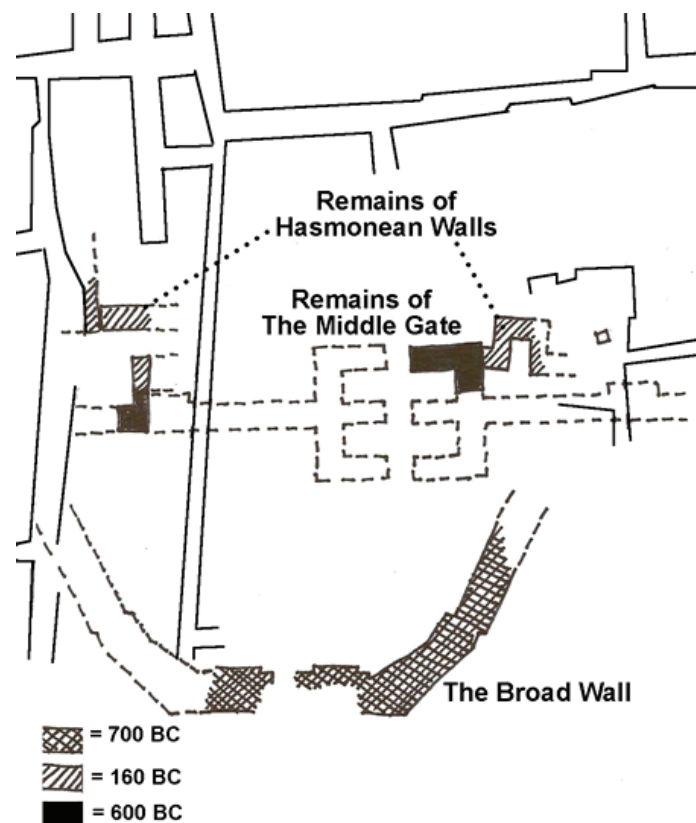
By 141 BC Simeon Maccabaeus was able to oust the Seleucid military and its supporters who had been holed up in the Acra.

*The occupants of the Citadel in Jerusalem (the Acra), prevented as they were from coming out and going into the countryside to buy and sell, were in desperate need of food, and numbers of them were being carried off by starvation. They begged Simeon to make peace with them, and he granted this, though he expelled them and purified the Citadel from its pollutions. . . . He (Simeon) fortified the Temple hill on the Citadel side, and took up residence there with his men.* - 1 Maccabees 13:49-52

Simeon and Hyrcanus I built the "First Wall" around the southern portion of the city on the western hill, which was called the Upper City. In 134-132 BC the Seleucids attacked Jerusalem but could not penetrate its walls. John Hyrcanus I signed a treaty with the attackers which required the demolition of parts of Jerusalem's rebuilt fortifications. In return, the siege was lifted and Jerusalem was recognized as an independent kingdom by the Seleucids. Residences were then added in the north, and a "Second Wall" was built to protect the citizens there.

## Chapter 30

### Walls and Towers



This diagram shows the location of Hasmonean wall remains that are found in the line of the old First Wall. This wall line ran from the Tower of Mariamme to the east, including the portion of the wall in the photos below. It reached the Western Wall of the Temple Mount.

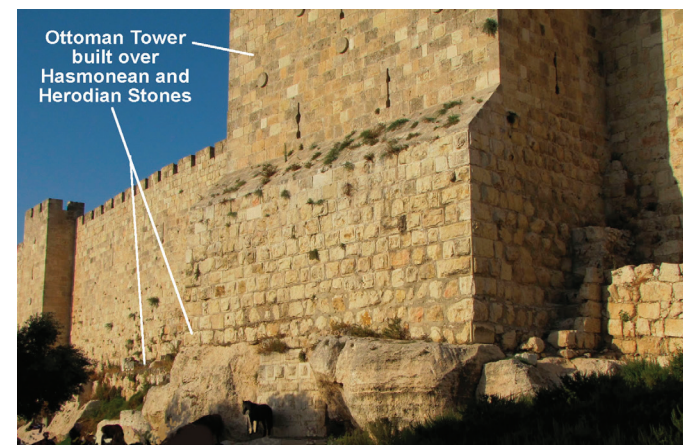


We can see four things in the remains of this wall, which is located in the northern part of the Jewish Quarter: 1) It was part of the gate system that protected the western section of the city on the north wall. The entrance to the city is on the right of this photo; 2) The remains of the wall built by the Hasmoneans around 150 BC can be seen in the stones at the bottom of the photo; 3) To the left and down, the stones form a straight seam which divides the wall into two sections - right and left, or west and east. The left section was the base of a tower that guarded the gate; 4) The column and its base, seen on the top of the wall, are from the Byzantine street called the Roman Cardo from 140 AD. Many of these Roman columns and much of the paved Cardo street can still be seen running through the Jewish Quarter.

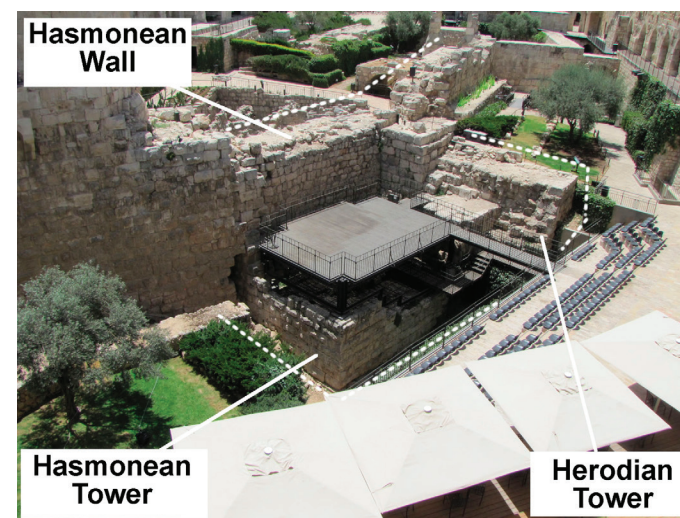
The rocks of the Hasmonean tower to the left (west) of the gate.



Looking from the top down on this same section of wall. Here we can see the entrance to the city through the opening/gate in the bottom right of the photo, and the Roman Cardo column built over the wall 300 years later.



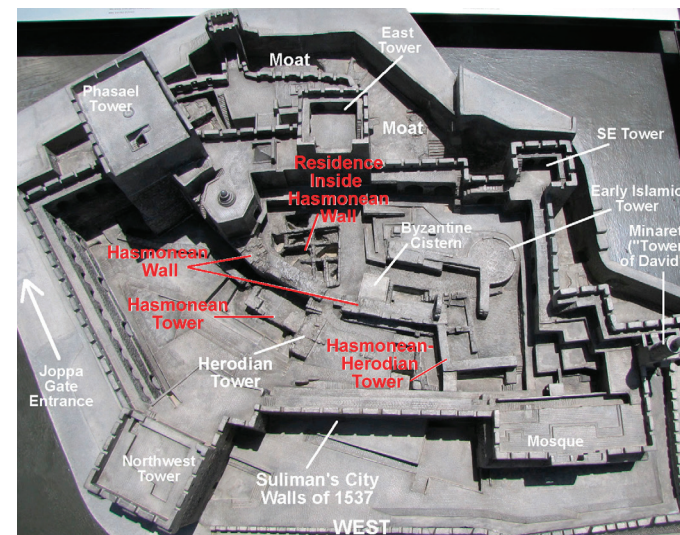
A view of the west city wall of the Old City. The Hasmonean work mentioned in the caption of the Citadel photo above continues south of the Citadel, and is visible in the lower stones of the wall on the right and left sides of the tower. The tower itself was also built by the Hasmoneans and restored by Suleiman in 1535. The Hasmonean stones can be seen in this tower setting on the bedrock to the height of eleven courses of ashlar. The Hasmonean stones have margins cut around the edges and rough boss in the middle of each block. The Hasmoneans carved this same look into the bedrock (seen behind the horse at the bottom middle of the photo) to create an appearance of stone work to match the stones they used to build the tower above.



The Hasmonean wall in the Citadel continues south under the present west wall of the city. It continues to arch to the east (left in photo) and its remains can be seen again in the Jewish Quarter today near the Broad Wall in the Cardo (as seen in the photos above). These walls are labeled in the photo of the Citadel model in the photo below.



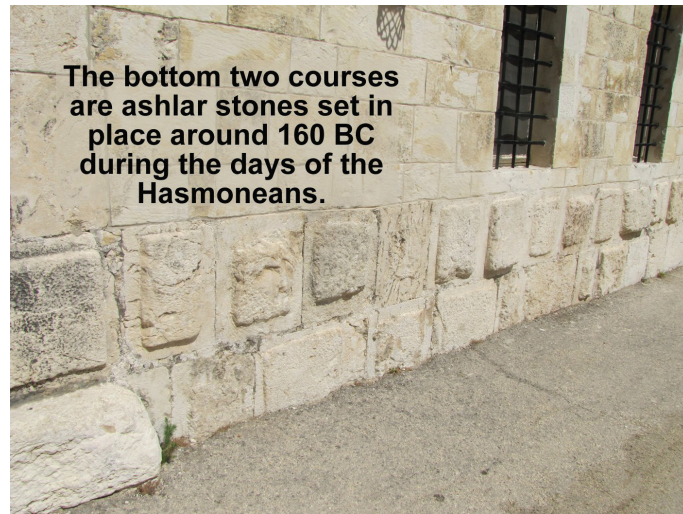
Hasmonean ashlar stones in the west wall of the Old City.



A model of the citadel with some locations and sites identified. The Maccabees, or Hasmoneans, also used this site by the Joppa Gate as a fortress or citadel. The remains of their walls are labeled in this model but can also be seen in the walls in the photo above this image.



Notice the margins cut smooth around the edges and the rough boss in the middle decorating the face of each block.



The bottom two courses are ashlar stones set in place around 160 BC during the days of the Hasmoneans.

Two courses of Hasmonean ashlars are still used in a building on campus at Jerusalem University College outside the south wall on what is called Mount Zion today.

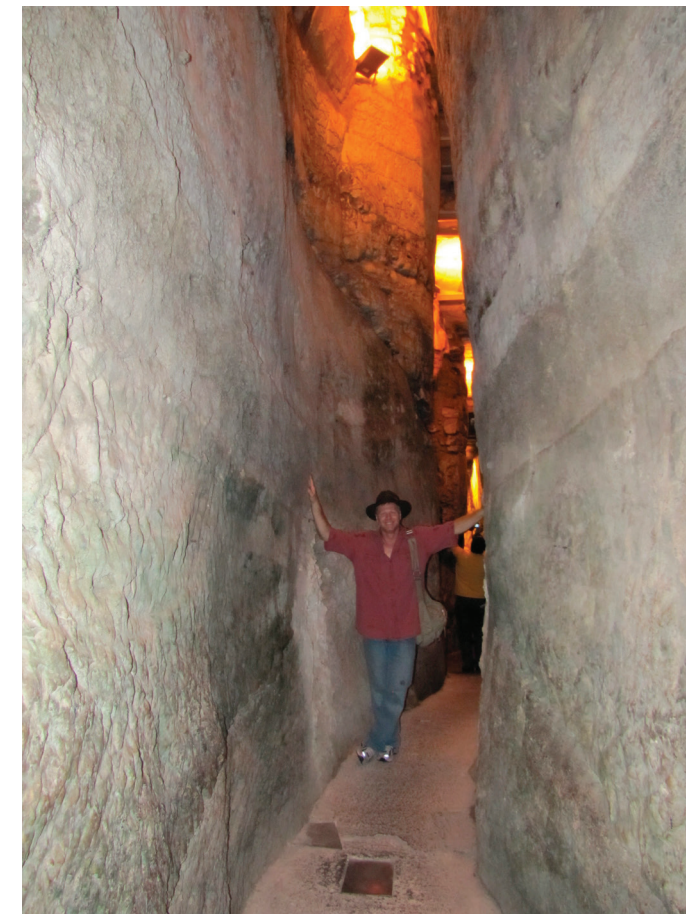


More Hasmonean ashlar stones in the west wall of the city.



The tall straight wall with the corner is a portion of Nehemiah's wall from 445 BC that the Hasmoneans re-built around 150 BC on the east side of the City of David. The Stepped Stone Structure is to the right in this photo. Some of the retaining walls from 1200 BC can also be seen in the bottom right of this photo.

## Chapter 31 Hasmonean Aqueduct



The Hasmonean aqueduct cut into the bedrock in 150 BC is located north of the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. It brought water into the city from the pools located in the area. In 19 BC, Herod expanded the Temple Mount northward to include this area. At that time, the aqueduct was cut into, and the water was redirected. The walls and floor of this aqueduct have been worn smooth by water.

These pools of water, which are accessed through the Western Wall Tunnels, are located at the northwest corner of Herod's Temple Mount. They were open reservoirs in the days of the Hasmoneans and connected to the aqueduct. The Hasmoneans built this open air aqueduct to bring water from the north side of the Temple Mount into the city and the Temple Mount. The water was used as a moat on the north side of Fort Antonia in Herod's day. In 135 AD, Hadrian built arched supports and vaults over these pools and used them as cisterns with a marketplace built over the tops of the arched vaults on the street level above. The water was collected in the Struthion pool. Josephus describes this reservoir and calls it Struthius ("sparrow" or "lark"). It was one of the smaller reservoirs in Jerusalem.



The arch and vaulted ceiling built by Hadrian over the Hasmonean water reservoirs. The Romans built a market square at ground level above these arches over the pool.



The openings in the vaulted ceiling that can be seen in this photo (and in the photo above) were used in Hadrian's time (around 135 BC) to access the water in these covered pools from the market square that was built above.

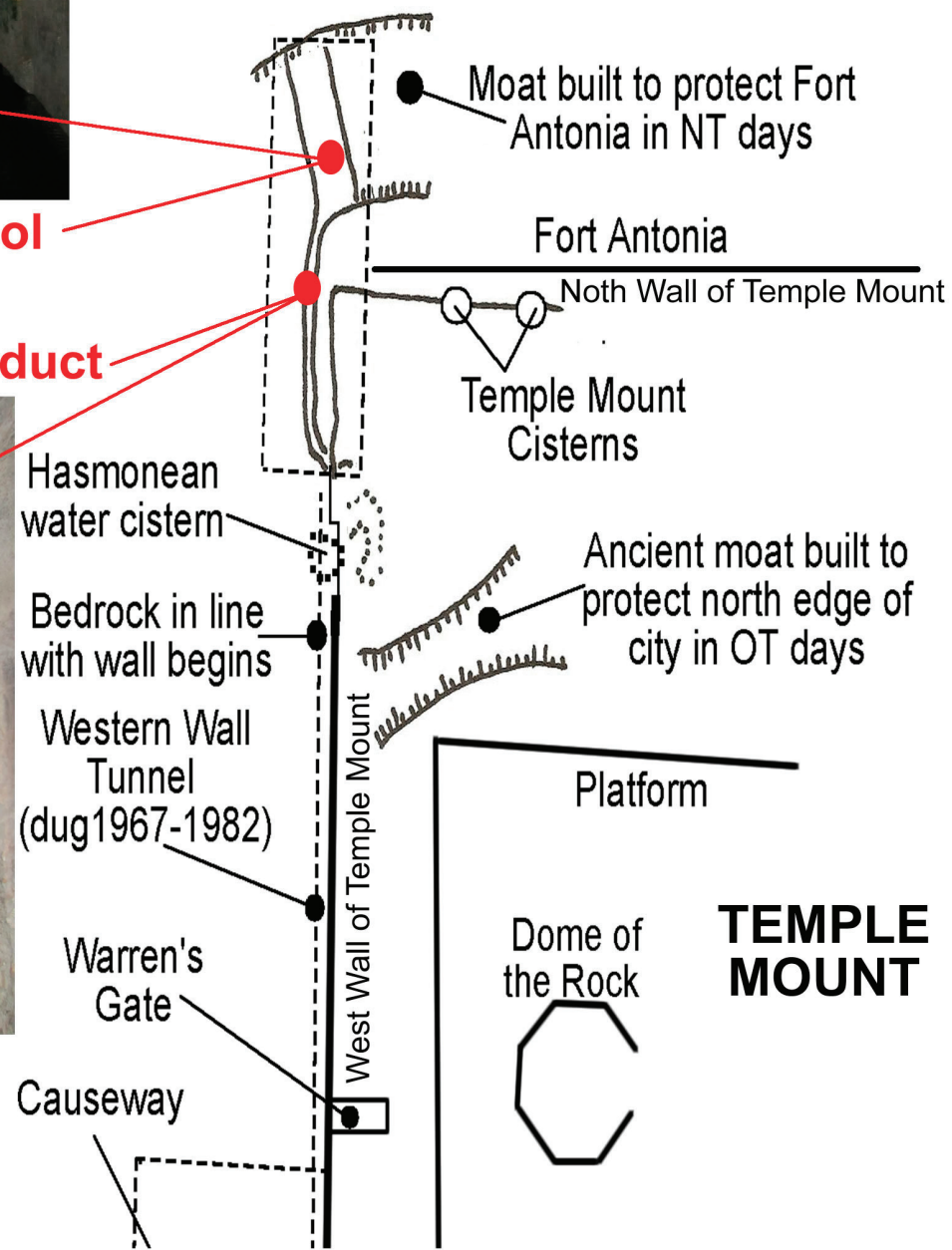
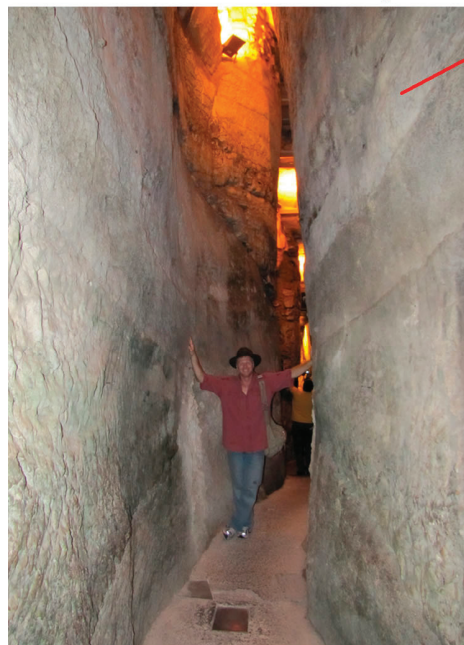




**Struthion Pool**

This diagram shows the location of the Hasmonean aqueduct and the pools that still collect water. They are both accessed through the Western Wall Tunnels and are located at the northwest corner of Herod's Temple Mount.

**Hasmonean Aqueduct**



## Chapter 32

### Acra

The Acra was the Seleucid stronghold built in 186 BC against the south wall of Solomon's Temple Mount on the Ophel. It was used as a military post against the Jewish people who lived to the south and west, and to monitor Temple Mount activities between the years of 186-141 BC. At that time the Acra was torn down, and the

Temple Mount was extended to the south to cover it up in 141 BC. Two tunnels with staircases were added during this southern extension to increase access to the Temple Mount surface. These tunnels would be extended and accessed by Herod's Double and Triple Gates later.

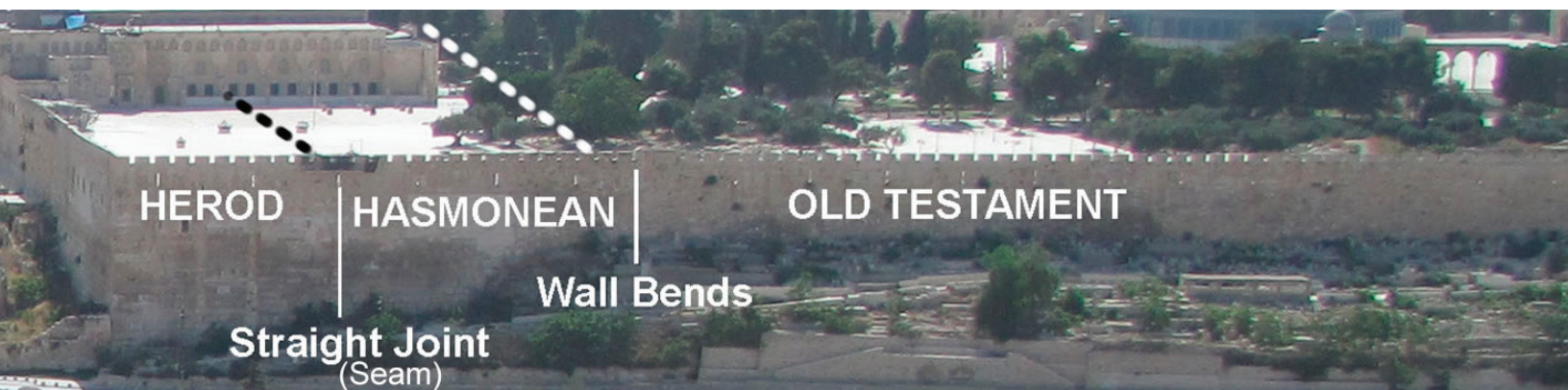
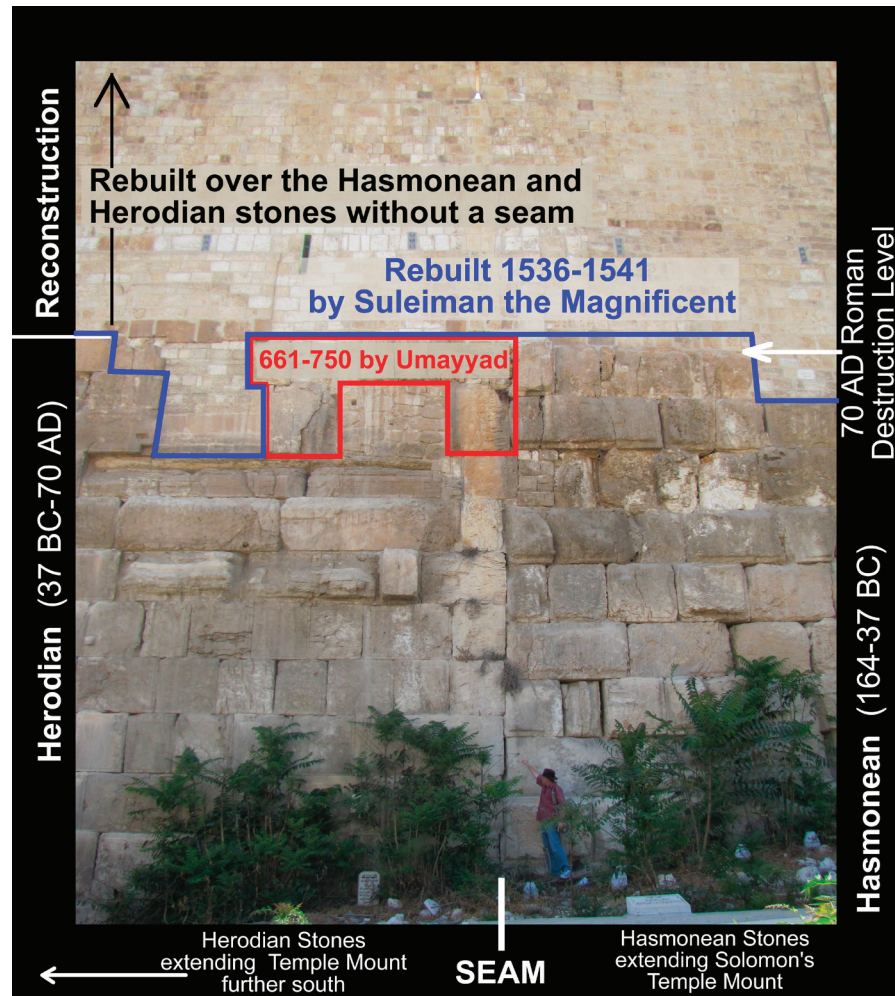


Remains of the southernmost walls of the Acra, which still extend south of the southern Temple Mount wall between the large stairway leading up to the Double and Triple Gates.

## Chapter 33

### Hasmonean Temple Mount Extension

This is a photo of the east wall of the Temple Mount. The straight seam (visible in the center of the photo, from the bottom of the wall up through the first six courses of the stones) is at the south end of the east wall. In the right half of this photo (from the straight seam to the right edge) are stones from the Hasmonean addition to the Temple Mount wall. The second extension to the left (south) of the Hasmonean extension was done by Herod beginning in 37 BC. These southern additions covered up most of the remains of the Seleucid fortress called the Acra.



At the south end of the east city wall, which is also the east wall of the Temple Mount, the beginning of the Hasmonean extension onto the Old Testament wall of Solomon's time can be identified by a bend in the wall.

The Herodian extension of the Temple Mount begins where the Hasmonean extension ended. The Herodian extension begins with a clearly visible seam between the new and the old ashlar stones which forms a straight joint.

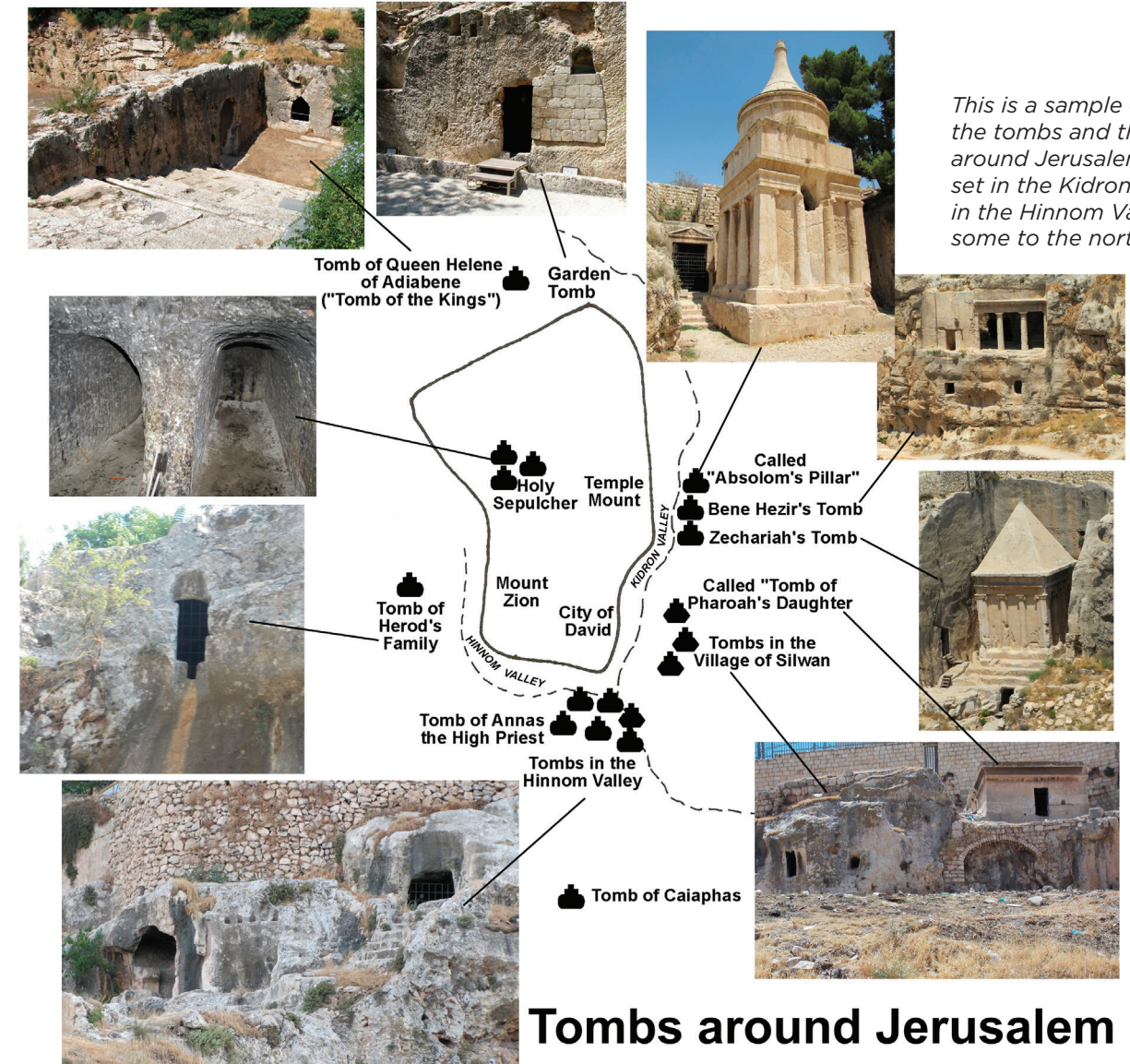
## Chapter 34

### Tombs in the Kidron Valley

Since the Jews would not bury their dead inside the city walls, Jerusalem is surrounded by tombs. There are tombs to the west in the Hinnom Valley, tombs to the south where the Hinnom and Kidron Valleys meet, tombs to the north of today's Old City walls and, of course, tombs to the east in the Kidron Valley where the Messiah is to appear to raise the dead, judge mankind and enter his Temple on Mount Moriah. During the days of the Hasmoneans, Hellenistic culture influenced the building of elaborate tombs, and this practice continued into the days of the New Testament. Eight hundred tombs from the time of Herod have been discovered within a 3 mile radius around the city. Jesus was buried in a tomb that was being cut for a Sanhedrin member outside the city walls of 30 AD to the west.

The tombs in the Kidron Valley shown in the photos below were present in the days of Jesus, who would have walked past them many times and constantly viewed them whenever his eyes scanned the Kidron Valley or the Mount of Olives. He even spoke about them in the Gospels, calling them "beautiful" when he addressed the religious leaders on the Temple Mount:

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.*  
- Matthew 23:27



This is a sample of a few of the tombs and their locations around Jerusalem. Some are set in the Kidron Valley, some in the Hinnom Valley and some to the north of the city.

### Tombs around Jerusalem



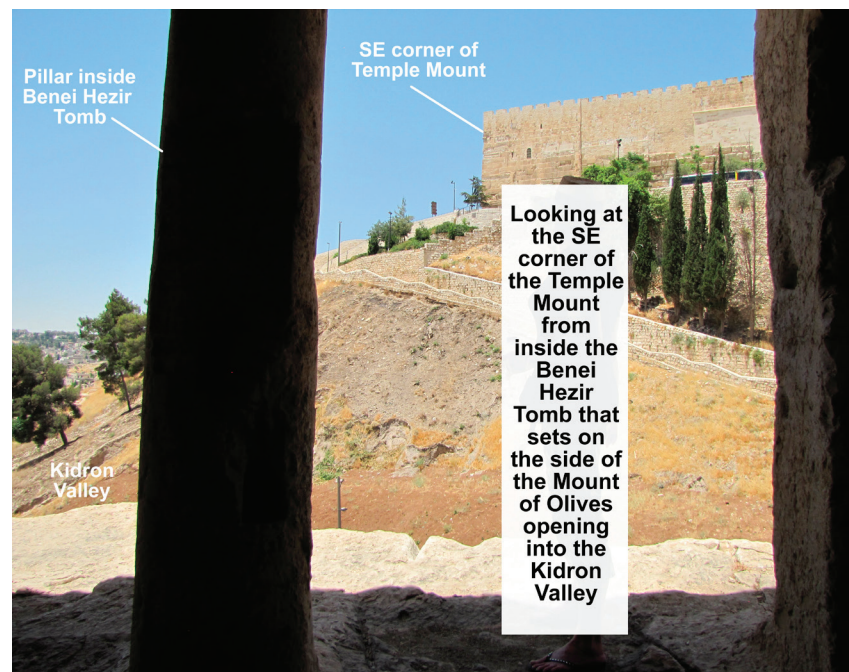
A view of the Bene Hezir family tomb from the Kidron Valley. (The tomb called Zechariah's Tomb can be seen to the right, or south, in this photo.)



Three tombs are visible in this photo taken from the eastern wall of the Temple Mount. 1) To the left is a tomb with two Doric columns identified as belonging to a family of priests by an inscription inside the tomb that mentions the "sons of Hezir", or "Bene Hezir"; 2) In the middle is a tomb known as Zechariah's Tomb (about 30 people in the Bible are called Zechariah); 3) To the right, south of "Zechariah's Tomb," is an unfinished tomb cut in the rock. More detail and photos of these three tombs are below.



Here is a close up of the tomb belonging to a family of priests named Bene Hezir (or, sons of Hezir). 1 Chronicles 24:1 and 15 mention a priest named Hezir from the line of Aaron serving in the days of David. An inscription written in Hebrew found on the tomb says: This is the tomb and the monument of Alexander, Hanniah, Yo'ezer, Judah, Simon, Johanan, the sons of Joseph son of Oved. Joseph and Eliezer sons of Hanniah - priests of the Hezir family. The inscription mentions a monument that may have been located to the left of the tomb entrance on the wall.



Looking out of the Bene Hezir Tomb from behind a couple of the Doric columns at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount setting on Mt. Moriah.

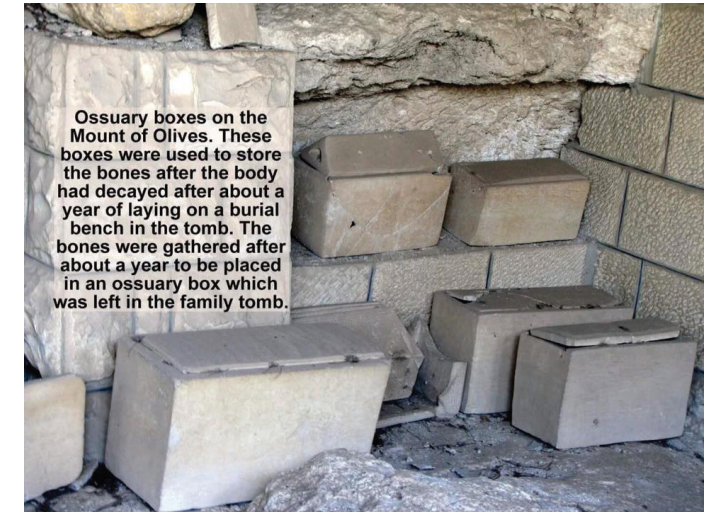


The Bene Hezir tomb is accessed through a hewn doorway in the bedrock in the stonewall setting north of Zechariah's Tomb. (See the location of this entrance in the photo below. Once you are standing in the small courtyard behind the Doric columns there is this small doorway into the tomb with the burial benches and the kokhim. Kokhim (singular kokh) is the Hebrew word for tunnels, niches or long narrow shafts. This is where the body of the deceased would be placed after being wrapped with spices and linen while lying on the burial bench. The Latin word for Kokhim is loculi (singular loculus).



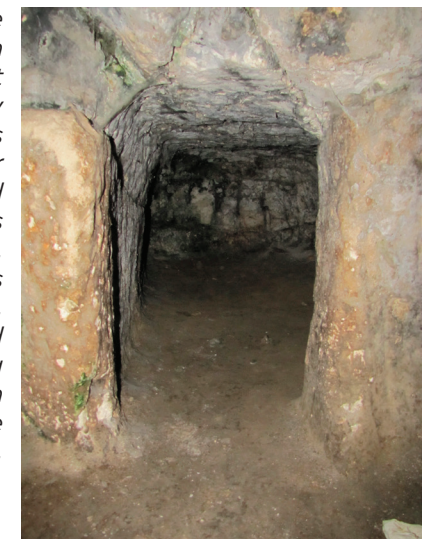
The north corner of the burial bench with two kokhim (Latin: loculi) where wrapped bodies were placed or stone ossuary boxes with the collected bones were kept.

The burial bench was where the body was prepared with fragrant spices and wrapped in linen. It could be left here or placed in one of the shafts, tunnels or graves called kokhim in Hebrew (loculi in Latin). The kokh was sealed with a small wooden door or a stone. After a year of decomposing the mourners would return to collect the bones, wash the bones in wine and place the bones in an ossuary or a small stone box about 12 inches wide, 12 inches high and 20 inches long. This stone box, or ossuary, would then be placed in the tomb on a shelf or in a carved out niche so that the kokh could be used again.



The south corner of the burial bench with a kokh to place the body.

A kokh in the Bene Hezir family tomb on the side of the Mount of Olives. The body would be slid into this kokh head first after it had been covered with fragrant spices and wrapped in cloth. A year later the bones would be collected, washed and placed in a 12"x12"x20" long ossuary box which was then kept in the tomb.





The front of the Bene Hezir tomb, viewed while standing on the floor of the Kidron Valley looking up at the Mount of Olives.



This tomb, known as Zechariah's Tomb, was cut during the life of Jesus. This rock hewn tomb was shaped by cutting away the stone of the Mount of Olives that surrounded it. This is how Constantine would have formed the monument around the tomb of Jesus in 326 AD when he cut away the stone around the burial bench leaving enough stone intact to create a cubical stone monument called the Holy Sepulcher. In 1009 AD the Muslim Caliph chipped and chiseled into pieces the stone monument Constantine had hewn around the burial place of Christ in an attempt to rid Jerusalem of Christianity.



Zechariah's Tomb is a cube cut out of the rock with Ionic pilasters and a pyramid top. "A" in the photo marks a corridor with steps that provides access to the tomb of the Bene Hezir family to the left. "B" marks a small chamber cut under the base to serve as a tomb. "C" is placed on one of the three rock walls that remained when the stone was cut away to shape this tomb or monument out of the bedrock of Mount of Olives. To the right (south) the letter "D" marks a tomb that was never finished. We may assume the Roman Wars beginning in 66 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD interrupted this unfinished tomb's building process. This monument (called "Zechariah's Tomb") in the middle with the pyramid top may have been built to honor those who would be buried in the unfinished tomb to the south.

This is a view looking between the rock wall and the side of Zechariah's Tomb. The remaining rock wall is to the left (north) and the tomb/monument is to the right (south). The back corner and back wall (which is the bedrock of the Mount of Olives) can also be seen.



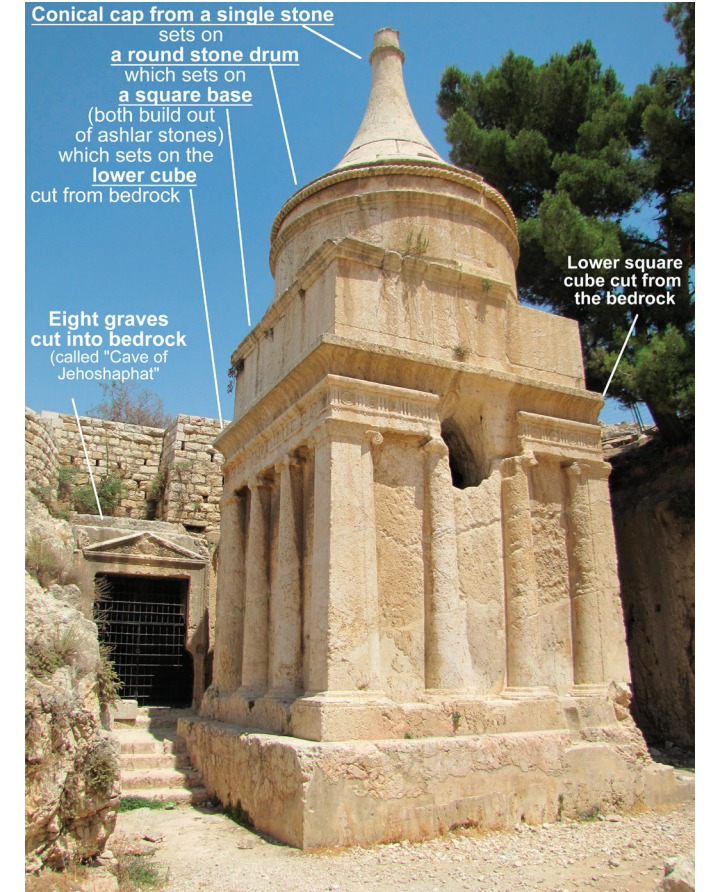
A Hebrew inscription is cut into one of the carved pillars on the front of Zechariah's Tomb.



Detailed stone work is cut into the front of Zechariah's Tomb

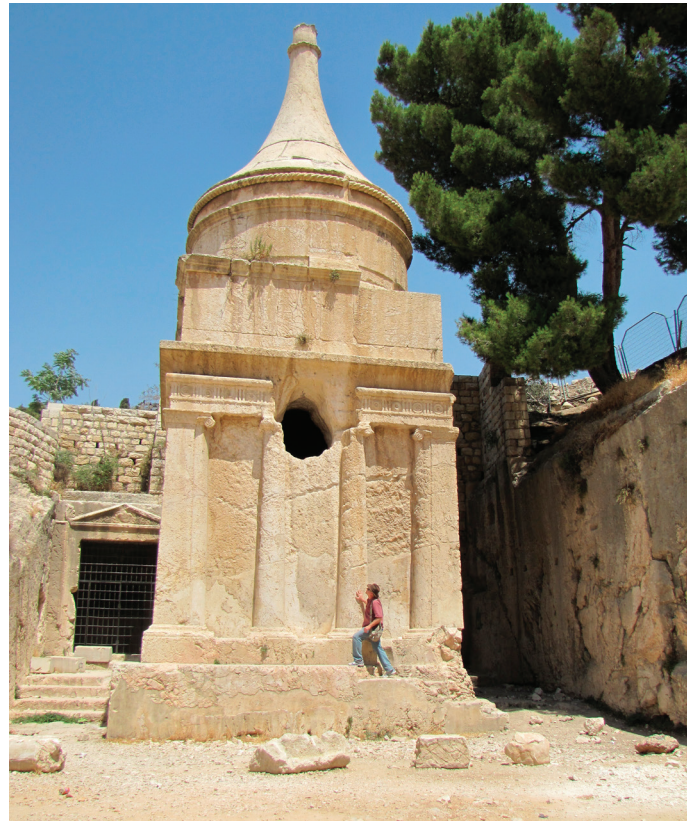


An unfinished tomb cut in the rock to the south of "Zechariah's Tomb".



**Stone Monument**  
This is a stone monument cut out of bedrock. This is not a tomb itself. This monument is sitting in front of 8 burial chambers tunneled into rock behind. It is known as Pillar of Absalom, but was cut during life of Jesus and has nothing to do with Absalom or his time.

This tomb is just a little further north of the three previously mentioned tombs in the Kidron Valley. It was constructed during Jesus' lifetime. Today it is traditionally called the Pillar of Absalom or Absalom's Monument. The Bordeaux Pilgrim referred to it as the Tomb of Hezekiah in 333 AD. It was first associated with Absalom by Benjamin of Tudela in 1170 because of 2 Samuel 18:18. The actual person or family for whom this tomb was prepared is unknown. The architectural style includes both Egyptian and Greek influences, which would have come from the two kingdoms that dominated Judea between 300-100 BC. The Egyptian influence came from the Ptolemys of Egypt, and the Hellenistic style from the Seleucids, who were Greeks ruling in Syria. The lower square is cut from the bedrock. It is topped with a circular stone drum made from nicely formed ashlar stones with a finely-cut conical top that was cut from one single stone. Directly to the left of this tomb is an eight-chambered catacomb with well-preserved carved stone. The catacomb is called the Cave of Jehoshaphat. The Pillar of Absalom may have been a monument for the burial chambers in the Cave of Jehoshaphat, cut into the cliff behind it. There are two inscriptions in this monument. A two-line inscription above the door is from around 400 AD that says: "This is the tomb of Zachary, martyr, most holy priest, father of John the Baptist." A later inscription can be seen to the right of the door but only the word "simon" can be made out. Neither inscription is historically valuable or accurate.



Galyn examines Absalom's Monument in the Kidron Valley.



The hewn out space between Absalom's Monument (right) and the remaining wall (left) cut into the bedrock of the Mount of Olives.



This tomb is further south under the village of Silwan and is known as the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter. This tomb was cut, or hewn, out of the rock with passageways opened on three sides during, or right after, the Hasmonean age but is unidentified. This hewn sarcophagus was likely used by a leading public figure around 700 BC. Originally this tomb, which looks like a small house, was topped with a pyramid roof cut from a single rock. Sometime after 700 AD the pyramid roof was cut up into blocks to be reused. The process caused great damage to the tomb. More damage was caused by a hermit who used this tomb as a home. There was an ancient Hebrew inscription in the upper left corner of the entrance, but now only two letters remain. The rest of the inscription was destroyed when the hermit widened the doorway.



Looking up at the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter from the Kidron Valley. Other Old Testament period tombs of 950-586 BC can be seen to the left (north).

The Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter seen from the top. In the past there was a pyramid shaped stone covering this rock hewn tomb that would be similar to the top of Zechariah's Tomb.



Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter

5 of about 50 burial caves 950-586 BC

This is a view of the Kidron Valley looking north/northeast from David's Palace with the location of the tombs in Silwan identified.



Location of some rock cut tombs from 950-586 BC in the bedrock below today's town of Silwan.



5 of about 50 burial caves from 950-586 BC that had precisely planned and carved stonework with Hebrew inscriptions

Detailed photo of tombs under Silwan



Tombs on the side of Mount of Olives

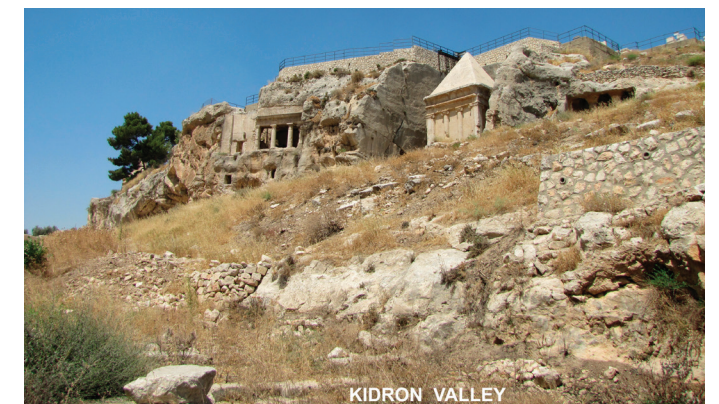
Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter

Absalom's Monument

KIDRON VALLEY

A nice view from the north side of the Kidron Valley looking south along the west side of the Mount of Olives to see Absalom's Monument in the front and the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter in the distance. Many Jewish tombs cover the side of the Mount of Olives where the prophet Zechariah says in Zechariah 14:4 the Messiah will return:

"On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem." - Zechariah 14:4



KIDRON VALLEY

The tombs of Bene-Hezir, Zechariah and the unfinished tomb on the side of the Mount of Olives as seen while walking in the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem.



An ancient ossuary that once held the bones of a deceased person.



Ossuary boxes could be simple or they could be decorated. These ossuary boxes were kept in the family tomb holding the bones so that at the resurrection they could rise again together.



## Chapter 35

### Tombs in the Hinnom Valley

There are many tombs in the Hinnom Valley. These tombs date from the time of David and include all periods of the Old Testament, through the Hasmonean age, and into the days of the New Testament. Tombs of the High Priests and their families are here, as is the tomb for Herod's family. Herod himself, however, was buried at the Herodian. His tomb was discovered in the spring of 2007. Below are photos of tombs in the Hinnom Valley.



Below are tombs south of Jerusalem in the Hinnom Valley near the tombs of Annas the High Priest and other priests in the New Testament. The tomb of the High Priest Caiaphas who oversaw Jesus' trial has been found with his and some of his family member's bones still in ossuary boxes with inscriptions identifying whose bones were kept inside. Caiaphas' ossuary is very elegant.



## Chapter 36

### Tombs around Jerusalem



This tomb is located north of the Damascus Gate outside the north walls of the Old City Jerusalem and is called the Tomb of the Kings, but it was hewn around 40 AD.

The tomb called the Tomb of the Kings is a funerary monument located 750 yards north of the Old City Jerusalem's north wall. The large courtyard was likely created when stones were quarried from here around 41 AD for use as stones in King Herod Agrippa I's northern Third Wall of the city. Once the needed quarry stones were removed it is likely that Herod Agrippa I (Herod the Great's grandson and the one who executed James and arrested Peter in Acts 12) began to convert this into his royal tomb. Several indicators show that this was a significant tomb created for royalty. Features such as the large monumental staircase for a large funeral procession, the enormous courtyard for the mourners to gather, and the existence of several main hewn chambers that are each connected to many smaller underground rooms that could hold 40-50 burials indicate the intended use was for royalty. But, many aspects of this tomb are unfinished such as the quarried stone blocks that have been left in place at the base of the monumental staircase. It would seem that whoever this tomb was originally being cut for died before it was completed. Also, a large part of the exterior detail is unfinished and the interior design is bare. This tomb was abandoned before it was completed. As the book of Acts records, Herod Agrippa I died in Caesarea by the sea in 44 AD.

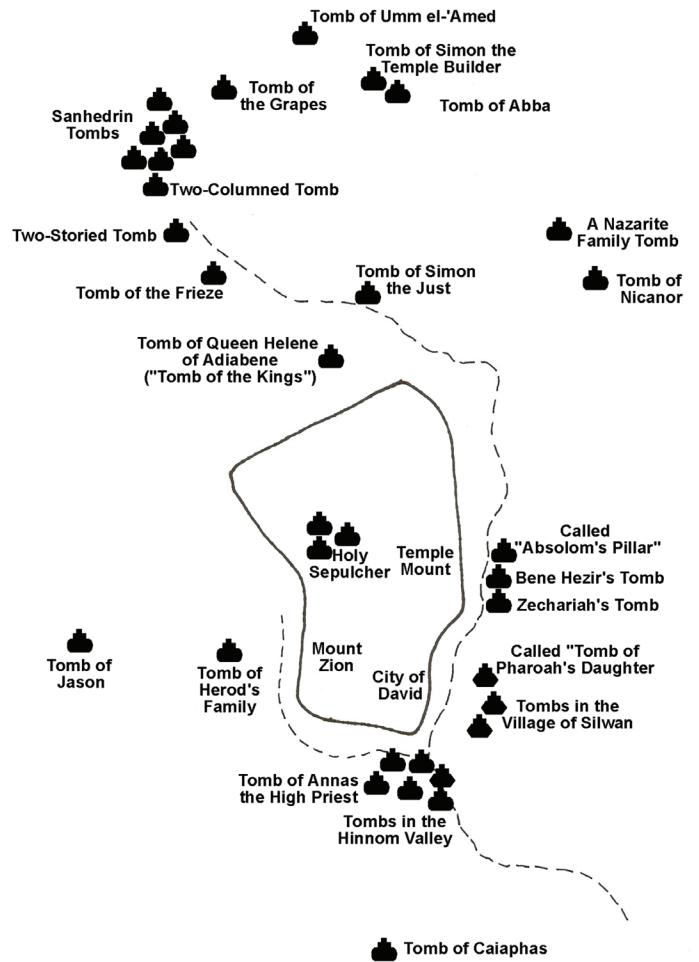
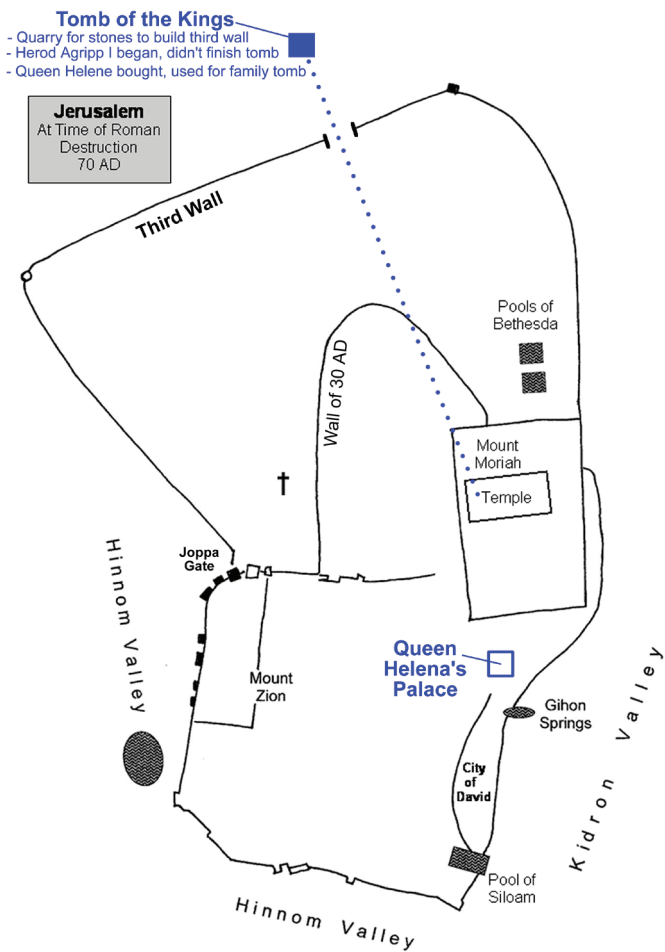
*"On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to spread and flourish." - Acts 12:21-24*

Josephus records the event in similar fashion:

*"Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a texture truly wonderful, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner...And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life," - Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter 19, Chapter 8, Section 2*



When Herod Agrippa I died in 44 AD he must have been buried somewhere else since this tomb was unfinished. According to Jewish law a used tomb could not be sold, but this tomb was unused since it had never been finished. Sometime after 44 AD but before 70 AD this tomb had been sold and used. It is most likely that Helena of Adiabene, a convert to Judaism around 30 AD, purchased this tomb when she moved to Jerusalem from Adiabene, a kingdom in northern Mesopotamia. More work was done to prepare this unfinished tomb for her and her family. When Helena died around 56 AD her body was returned to Jerusalem and buried in this tomb. Recent research by Jean-Baptiste Humbert and Jean-Sylvain Caillou combined with investigation and archaeology at this site since 1863 make this tomb and its history very interesting and much more definitive.



The Garden Tomb is one of several Jewish tombs in the area north of today's Old City walls that date back to 800-600 BC. Since the 1800's Protestants often mistake this as the tomb of Christ.