

## CHAPTER 1

# ARCHITECTURE, BURIAL CUSTOMS AND CHRONOLOGY

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The confluence of the Kidron and Hinnom Valleys, south of the Old City of Jerusalem, contains one of Jerusalem's richest concentrations of rock-hewn tombs. This area, located on the periphery of the village of Silwan (Fig. **1**.1), was one of the main burial grounds of Jerusalem in the First Temple period (Ussishkin 1993). Numerous tombs were hewn in the lower Kidron Valley basin in the Second Temple period (Kloner 1980:60–66; Fig. **1**.2). Several of these were reused much later, either for burial or as shelters for hermits and monks of the large monastic communities which inhabited the Kidron Valley (Macalister 1900a; 1901; Ussishkin 1993:346–358; Avni 1993).

Early Christian traditions identify this area with the Potter's Field, or the Field of Blood, bought as a burial ground for foreigners by the High Priest with Judas' 30 silver pieces (Matt. 27:3–10). An alternative version of

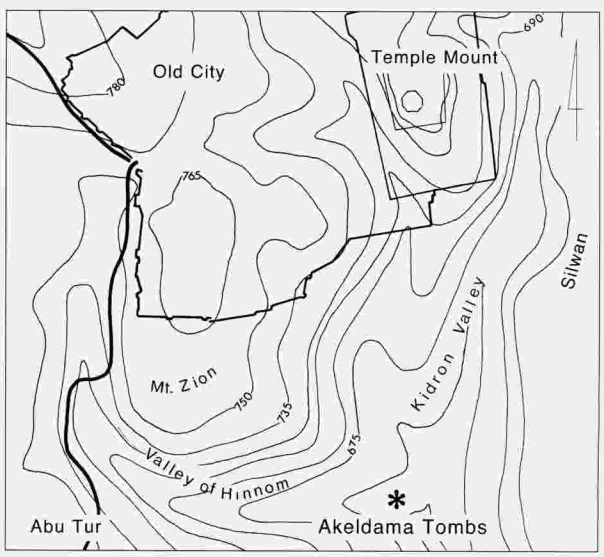



*Fig. 1.1. Map of the Akeldama area.*

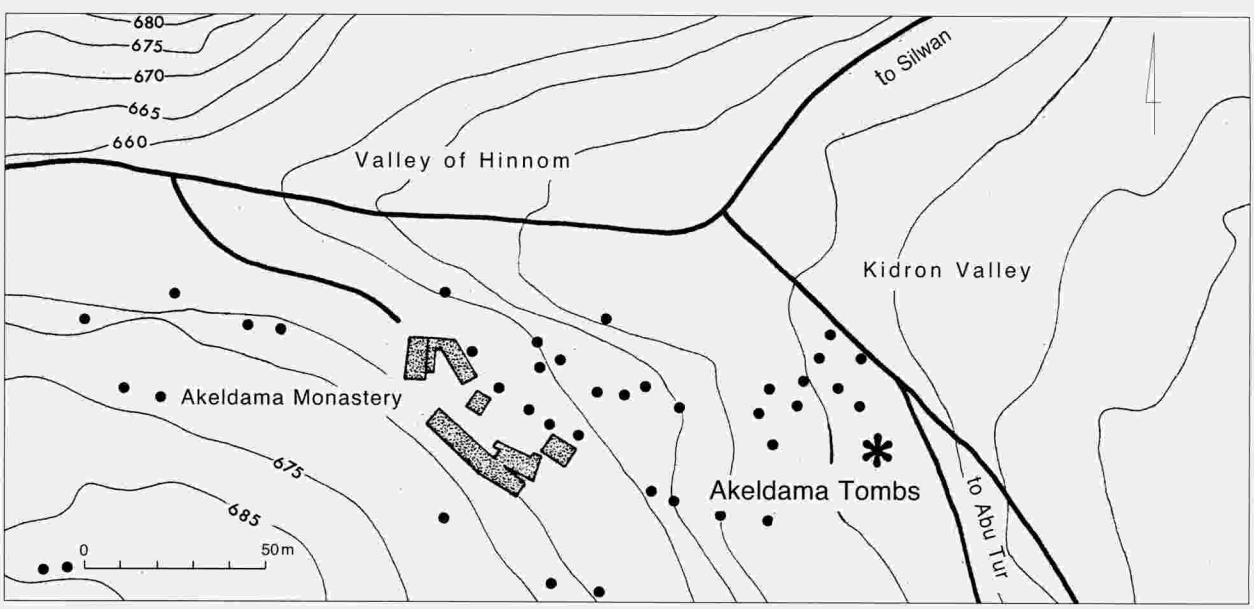



*Fig. 1.2. Map of burial caves in the lower Valley of Hinnom.*

this tradition relates that this was the field bought by Judas himself after the betrayal (Acts 1:18–19).

The use of the south part of the Hinnom Valley as a burial ground for foreigners is mentioned by Antoninus Martyr, who visited Jerusalem at about 560 CE (Wilkinson 1977:84). In 1143 the area was granted to the Knights of St. John as a burial ground for pilgrims; several decades later it was conceded to the Armenians, for whom it served as a burial ground at least until the seventeenth century (Schick 1892a).

The ancient tombs in this area attracted the attention of many nineteenth century travellers and scholars, who described this cluster of elaborate burial caves (e.g. De Saulcy 1853:313–324; Wilson 1865:67–68; Warren and Conder 1884:417–420; Baedeker 1876:117–120). Some of the tombs had been surveyed and measured at that time; several were documented (Tobler 1854:237–260; Pierotti 1864:205–207; Schick 1890a; 1890b; Petrie 1892:32; Brandenburg 1926; and others). In a survey conducted by Macalister in 1900 numerous caves were systematically documented (Macalister 1900a; 1901); additional caves were recorded in the course of cleaning and building activities on the premises of the nearby Akeldama convent and its vicinity (Dalman 1939). The overwhelming majority of these caves was found plundered and empty, and only their richly carved facades and interior architectural features testify to their past glory.[1]

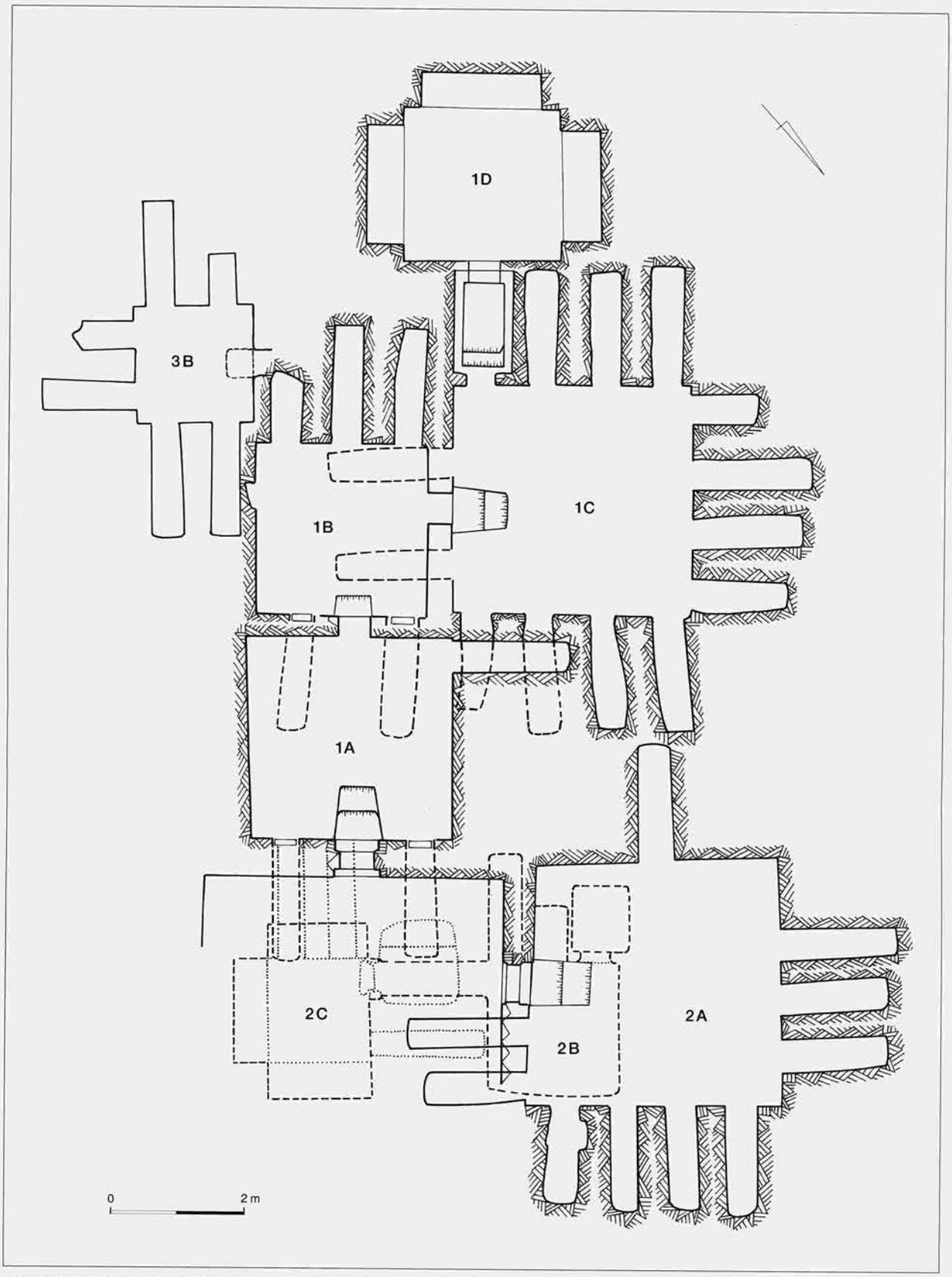
During repairs carried out in the summer of 1989 on the road leading from Abu Tur to Silwan, three burial caves were accidentally exposed at the foot of the west bank of the Kidron Valley, east of the Greek Orthodox convent of St. Onuphrius. The road works first uncovered part of a rock-cut rectangular courtyard, probably entered from the east, from which two small square openings led westward and northward to burial caves (Fig. **1**.3). These openings were found sealed by square stones with an interior protuberance, which fitted the opening exactly. Removal of the sealing stones revealed two large burial caves, each containing several rock-cut chambers. The rich finds in the caves, some of them still *in situ*, included dozens of ossuaries, many of them inscribed, along with numerous pottery and glass vessels, jewelry items, and other finds. Apparently, the caves had not been plundered in modern times, in contrast to most of the other caves in the vicinity.

Salvage excavations conducted following this accidental discovery unearthed three elaborate burial caves, initially dating from the Second Temple period (see below; Plan **1**.1).[2] The southwest tomb (Cave 1) had four chambers. The northwest tomb (Cave 2) consisted of a central burial chamber and two additional chambers on a lower level. A third tomb (Cave 3), southwest of Cave 1, contained four chambers; it was reached by the excavators through a narrow breach in the southeast wall of Chamber B of Cave 1, which led to Loculus I in Chamber B of Cave 3 (see below).

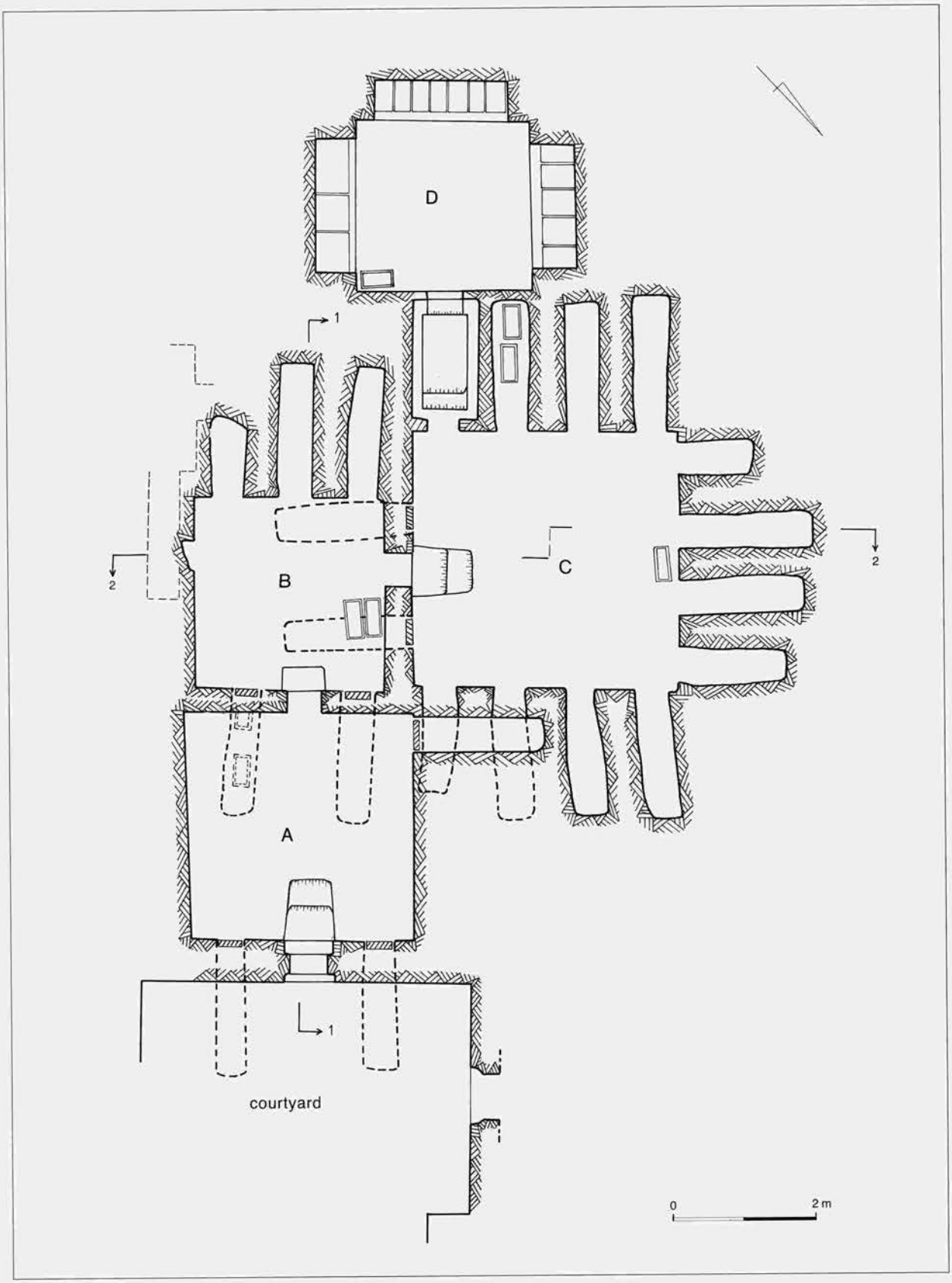
*Fig. **1**.3. The Akeldama tombs, courtyard and entrances to Caves 1 and 2, looking west.*

From the very beginning of the excavation it became clear that these tombs had a burial sequence uncommon among the tombs of the Second Temple period in Jerusalem. Alongside the rich finds dating from the original burial phase of the late Second Temple period, there was solid evidence of reuse of the tombs for burial in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods.

During the salvage excavation, conducted for merely a few intensive days, Cave 1 was excavated in its entirety. The finds in each chamber and loculus were recorded in detail,[3] the earth accumulation was sifted, and all skeletal remains were collected. The two other tombs were only partially excavated. In Cave 2, the repository chamber (B) and the back chamber (C) were excavated, while the upper chamber (A), which contained a massive accumulation of Byzantine interments, remained unexcavated, except for a limited probe in the south corner. Due to technical limitations and security problems, which prevented long-term excavation at the site, anthropological remains could not be collected in this cave, apart from the bones deposited in ossuaries. In Cave 3, which was found intact and practically free of accumulation, only surface finds and the anthropological remains in the ossuaries could be collected and documented.




*Plan 1.1. Schematic plan of the caves, indicating their relative location.*



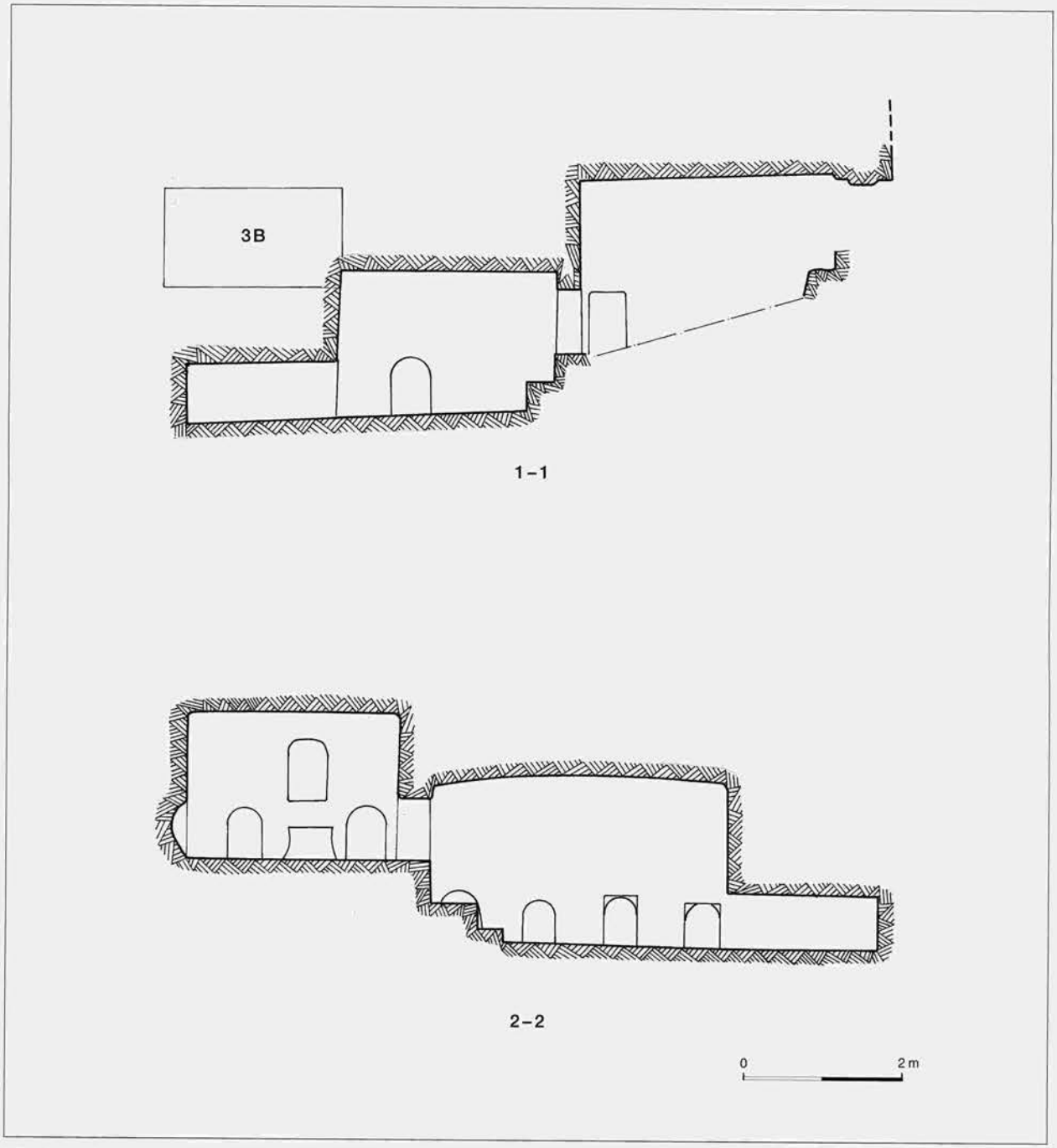

*Plan 1.2a. Cave 1 – Plan.*

## DESCRIPTION OF THE TOMBS

### BURIAL CAVE 1

(Plan **1**.2)

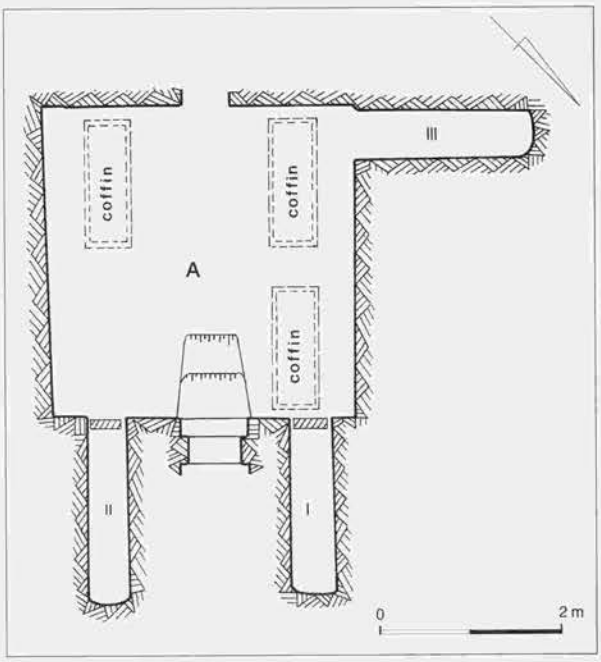
This cave contained an entrance chamber (A), two burial chambers (B–C) with loculi (*kokhim*), and a back chamber (D) with arcosolia and burial troughs. The rock-cut walls of the courtyard (3.35 x 4.85 m) were *c.* 2 m high. The entrance to Cave 1 (0.6 x 0.6 m) was hewn in the center of the courtyard's southwest wall. The square sealing stone of the entrance was found *in situ*, and the cave did not seem to have been entered since the tomb's last use. The sealing stone is of local limestone and measures 1.2 x 1.2 m; its center, which protrudes 0.1 m, fitted a 0.8 x 0.8 m recess in the cave facade.




*Plan **1**.2b. Cave 1 – Sections.*

**Chamber A** (Plan **1**.3)

Three rock-cut steps led down from the entrance to the floor of Chamber A, which was square (3.3 x 3.3 m, H *c.* 2.3 m), with carefully hewn walls forming right-angled corners. Two long loculi, hewn at floor level in the northeast chamber wall, flank the entrance. Loculus I (0.55 x 1.9 m, H 0.6 m) had a square slab of local limestone blocking the opening; the blocking stone was secured in place with plaster. The opening of Loculus II (0.65 x 2.05 m, H 0.65 m) was also blocked by a stone slab. An additional loculus (III; 0.55 x 1.9 m, H 0.6 m) was hewn in the northwest wall of the chamber.




*Plan 1.3. Cave 1 – Plan of Chamber A.*

*Fig. 1.4. Cave 1, Chamber A – The entrance to the cave, looking northeast.*

The entrance chamber was found partially filled with earth, which had trickled in through cracks around the sealing stone, creating an accumulation 0.5–0.8 m deep (Fig. **1**.4). Remains of a broken stone door with pivoting hinges were found in the upper part of the accumulation, near the passage to Chamber B (Fig. **1**.5). Fragments of an iron door-lock (Fig. **7**.3) were found nearby.

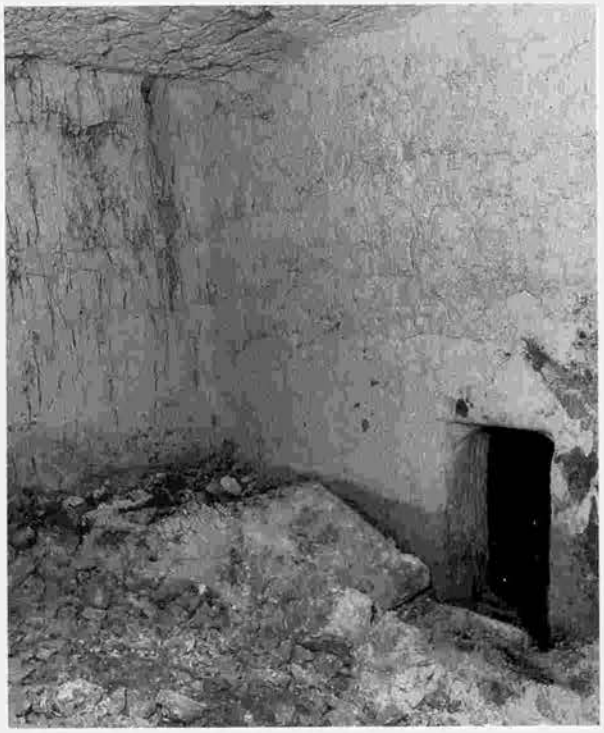


*Fig. 1.5. Cave 1, Chamber A – South corner before excavation, entrance to Chamber B and broken stone door.*

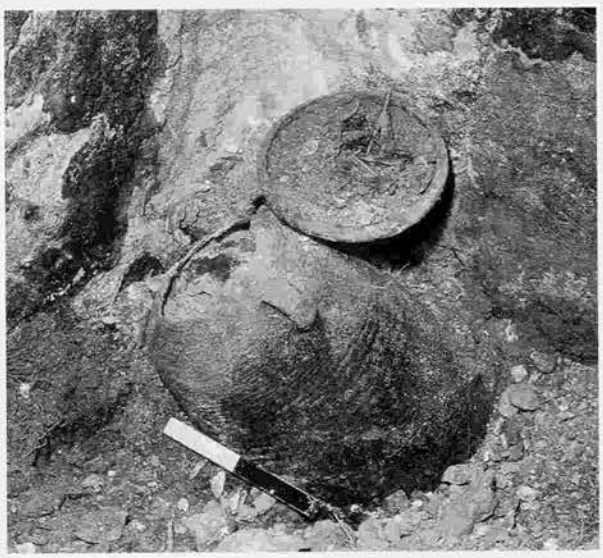


*Fig. 1.6. Cave 1, Chamber A – Byzantine storejar and krater at north corner of chamber.*

The soil accumulation on the chamber floor contained rich deposits of finds, representing a complete chronological sequence of the cave (see below). The earliest pottery fragment found in this chamber was that of an Iron Age bowl, which had probably penetrated from outside through the main entrance. The lowest part of the accumulation contained fragmentary domestic pottery of the first century BCE/first century CE (Fig. **4**.1), concentrated mainly in the south chamber corner, together with a coin dated to 40 BCE (Chap. **6**, No. 7). Scattered in the lowest part of the accumulation were also numerous bowls, jugs, jars and cooking pots, dated exclusively to the first century CE (Figs. **4**.2, **4**.3, **4**.5). On top of this accumulation, mainly near the south and west chamber corners, numerous first–third centuries CE rounded oil lamps (Figs. **4**.9, **4**.10) and glass bottles of the candlestick type (Table **5**.1) were recovered, together with several Late Roman gold earrings (Fig. **7**.1 and color plate). Traces of cremated bones (see Chap. **8**) were found close to the glass candlestick-type bottles.

Fragments of three wooden coffins were uncovered in the upper part of the accumulation in the south, west and north chamber corners, one near each corner. A complete krater (Fig. **4**.7:5) and a store jar, both of the fifth–seventh centuries CE, were found near the coffin recovered at the north corner of the chamber, close to the entrance to Loculus I (Fig. **1**.6). Additional Byzantine period bowls, basins, jugs, and jars were uncovered in the upper part of the accumulation (Fig. **4**.7) together with two glass funnel-mouth bottles, dated to the third–mid-fourth centuries CE (Table **5**.1, Nos. 4, 6).

The numerous coins found in this chamber represent an extensive timespan: from the first century BCE to the fifth century CE (Chap. **6**, Nos. 1–9). This chronological sequence is also represented by oil lamps: Roman rounded lamps of the second–third centuries CE (possibly starting in the late first century CE; Figs. **4**.9, **4**.10), 'Beit Naṭṭif' lamps of the third–fifth centuries CE (Figs. **4**.11:1,4,5, **4**.12:1–3,5, and see Appendix), and "Ain Yabrud' lamps of the fifth–sixth centuries CE (Fig. **4**.13:2–4,7,8, and see Appendix).

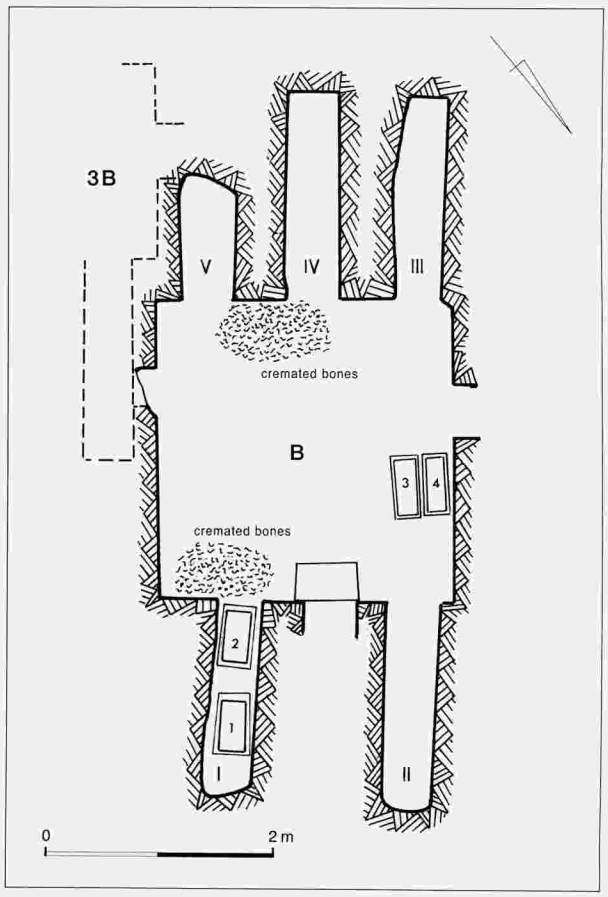
Chamber A yielded numerous other artifacts: iron finger-rings, iron and bronze bracelets and hoops, bronze bells and spatula, iron nails, a hematite spindle whorl, and glass, frit and carnelian beads (Chap. **7**).

The remains of seven individuals were uncovered in Chamber A, three of them associated with the apparently Byzantine wooden coffins found in the upper layer, and the rest scattered in the chamber (Table **8**.2). Evidence of cremation was found on some of the latter.

The stratigraphical sequence in this chamber indicates that, with the exception of the upper Byzantine burials, which were intact, all the other finds were not found in their original context. The artifacts from the inner chambers of the tomb were probably transferred to Chamber A during one of the phases of its reuse, prior to the Byzantine burial phase, possibly during the Late Roman period.

**Chamber B** (Plan **1**.4)

A small square opening (0.55 x 0.75 m) in the center of the southwest wall of Chamber A, opposite the main entrance, led to Chamber B. This square burial chamber (2.75 x 2.80 m, H 1.9 m) was hewn at a lower level and had five rock-cut loculi (Fig. **1**.7). Two steps led from the higher entrance down to the chamber floor (Fig. **1**.8). Two long loculi (0.55 x 1.75 m, 0.65 x 1.95 m, H 0.6 m) were hewn at floor level in the northeast wall, flanking the entrance (see Fig. **1**.8). The east loculus (I) contained two ossuaries placed end to end (Chap. **2**,




*Plan 1.4. Cave 1 – Plan of Chamber B.*

Nos. 1–2). Ossuary No. 1 contained collected bones. Seven glass candlestick-type bottles (Table **5**.1, Nos. 24–30) were found near the ossuaries, as well as a first century CE cooking pot (see Appendix). Three additional loculi were hewn at floor level in the wall opposite the entrance; III and IV (Fig. **1**.9) were long (0.5 x 1.9 m, H 0.6 m), and V (the south loculus) was shorter (L 1.2 m, H 0.55 m). Probably all loculi were originally sealed with stone slabs, but these were not found in the cave.

Many bone fragments were scattered in the loculi.

An attempt at carving out an additional loculus in the southeast wall resulted in a near-breach into the adjacent Cave 3. This near-breach suggests that Cave 1 was carved later than Cave 3. The proximity of the earlier tomb prevented the hewing of additional loculi in the southeast wall of Chamber B. An additional, probably unintentional breach in the wall between these two burial caves was made in the upper part of the southwest chamber wall.

*Fig. 1.7. Cave 1, Chamber B – South corner with Loculi III–V and near-breach into Cave 3.*

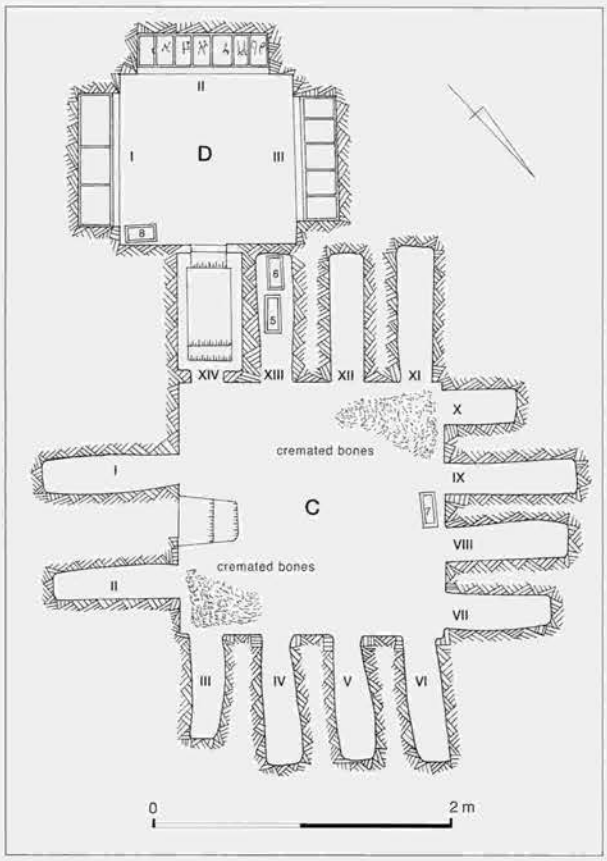
*Fig. 1.8. Cave 1, Chamber B – Northeast wall and passage from Chamber A, with Ossuaries 1–4.*

*Fig. 1.9. Cave 1, Chamber B – West corner with Loculi III and IV and opening to Chamber C, with Ossuaries 3–4.*

Chamber B was completely free of accumulation. Two ossuaries (Nos. 3, 4) containing collected bones were placed side by side near the northwest wall (Fig. **1**.9). Piles of bones, many of them bearing evidence of cremation, were found concentrated near the southwest wall and east corner (Table **8**.2). The cremated bones seem to attest to a reuse of the cave, when cremation became an accepted form of interment (see below). The Late Roman candlestick-type bottles found near the charred bones date this reuse.

**Chamber C** (Plan **1**.5)

An opening (0.5 x 0.6 m) in the northwest wall of Chamber B (see Fig. **1**.9) led to an additional burial chamber (C) hewn at a lower level. This was a relatively large square chamber (3.8 x 3.8 m, H 2.2 m), carefully hewn in the hard limestone, with precise right angles between walls, floor and ceiling. The entrance into this chamber was cut at its ceiling level; three large steps led down from the entrance to the floor (Fig. **1**.10). The chamber, which was found free of accumulation, had fourteen loculi – two flanking the entrance and four in each of the other walls (Figs. **1**.11, **1**.12 and color plate). Most loculi were long (L 1.8–2.1 m, W 0.45–0.55 m, H 0.75–0.80 m), while the two loculi near the east and west corners were shorter: Loculus III was 1.6 m long and Loculus X was 1.2 m long. Evidence from other tombs in the Jerusalem necropolis suggests that the shorter loculi were used as bone repositories (Kloner 1980:223). The loculi openings are arched; four loculi (V, VI, XIII and XIV) have a rectangular frame carved around the opening, probably for fitting a sealing stone. Five rectangular sealing slabs were found in this




*Plan **1**.5. Cave 1 – Plan of Chambers C and D. (Letters in Arcosolium II not to scale.)*

chamber, some of them *in situ*. Traces of plaster, which secured the sealing stones to the wall, were preserved around the openings of several other loculi.

Three ossuaries containing collected bones were found in this chamber; one (No. 7) was placed next to the wall between Loculi VIII and IX opposite the entrance, and two others (Nos. 5, 6) in Loculus XIII (Fig. **1**.13). An intact first century CE double-nozzled lamp (Fig. **4**.8:1) was found on the floor in the middle of the chamber (Fig. **1**.14). Additional pottery – a bowl, a juglet and two cooking pots, all of the first century CE (see Appendix) – was concentrated in and around Loculus IV, together with two glass candlestick-type bottles (Table **5**.1, Nos. 31, 32).

Concentrations of bones were found in most of the loculi and near the east and west chamber corners, especially near Loculi III and IV, where the remains of six individuals were identified (Fig. **1**.15, Table **8**.2). Distinctive evidence for cremation was found near the west corner, mainly charred remains and patches of charcoal. Evidence for cremation was also found in Ossuary 5 and possibly also in Ossuary 7. The location of this ossuary (opposite the chamber entrance) and the fact that it was used as a repository for cremated bones may indicate that it had some special significance during its secondary use in the Late Roman period.

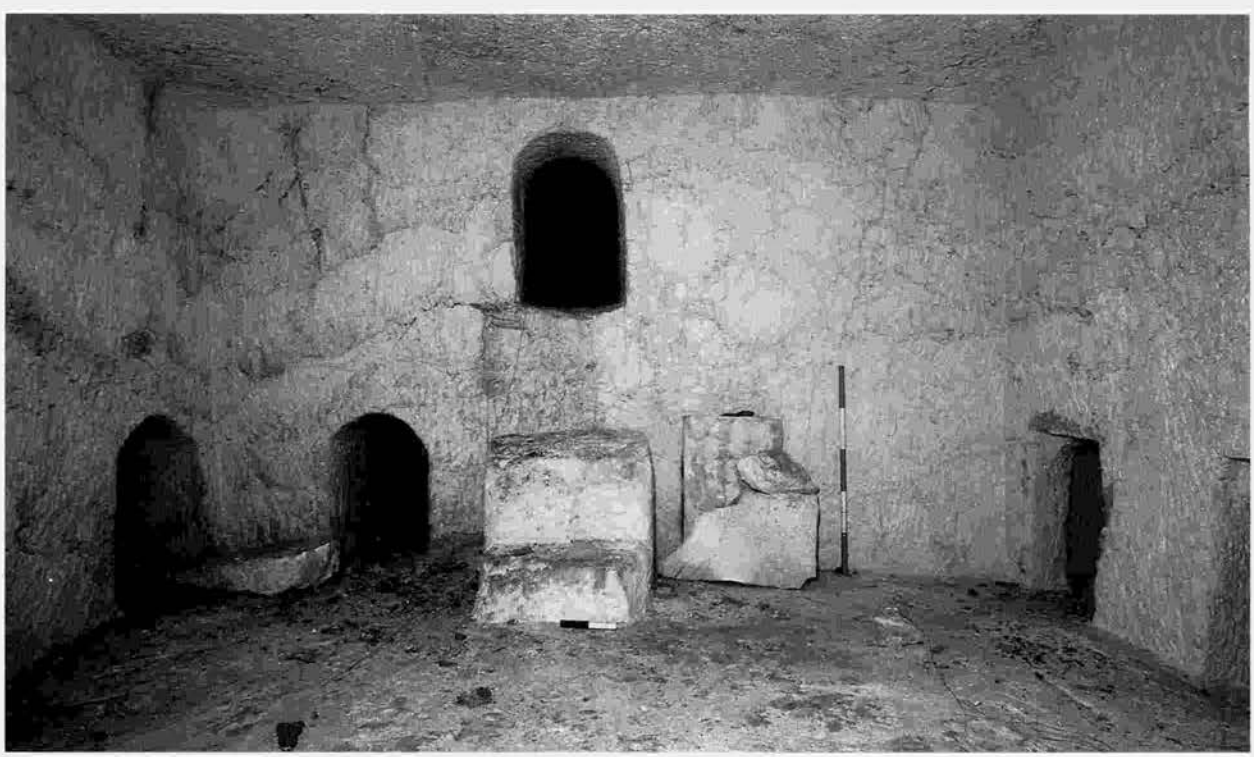


*Fig. **1**.10. Cave 1, Chamber C – Southeast wall, opening to Chamber B and Loculi I–III, XIV.*

*Fig. 1.11. Cave 1, Chamber C – Northeast wall with loculi; on right – steps leading from Chamber B.*

*Fig. 1.12. Cave 1, Chamber C with Ossuary 7, looking northwest.*

Near the south corner of the chamber, a possible former loculus (XIV) had been widened to form a narrow passage (0.95 x 1.70 m). In it two rock-cut steps descended to a small square opening, leading to the back chamber (D). The aperture (0.6 x 0.8 m) was blocked by a square stone slab secured with plaster to the passage walls. Removal of this stone revealed Chamber D.

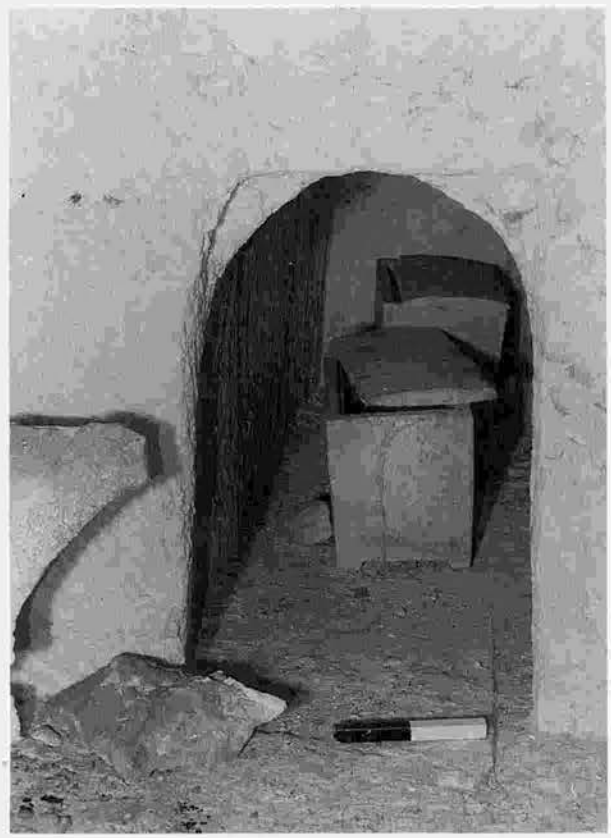


*Fig. **1**.13. Cave 1, Chamber C – Ossuaries 5–6 in Loculus XIII.*

*Fig. **1**.14. Cave 1, Chamber C – Double-nozzled oil lamp (Fig. **4**.8:1)* in situ.

*Fig. **1**.15. Cave 1, Chamber C – Loculus IV.*

**Chamber D** (Plan **1**.5)

This is a square chamber (2.50 x 2.50 m, H 1.80 m), meticulously hewn, with three arcosolia containing burial troughs – one in each of the walls, with the exception of the entrance wall (Fig. **1**.16 and color plate). Arcosolium II, opposite the entrance, was the largest (L 1.97 m, W 0.48 m; Fig. **1**.17); the northwest (Fig. **1**.18) and southeast arcosolia were 1.82 m and 1.95 m long respectively. Charcoal lines delineating the contours of the arcosolia were preserved at the top of each (Fig. **1**.19). These marks probably outlined the shape of the frame in which the arcosolium was hewn, while the exact line guiding the cutting may have been drawn with a compass.

The troughs in the arcosolia were covered with rectangular stone slabs which were inserted into a groove in the upper part of each trough and joined to each other and to the trough walls with plaster. The margins of the slabs were carefully worked with a wide

*Fig. **1**.16. Cave 1, Chamber D – The entrance, Arcosolium I and Ossuary 8* in situ, *looking east.*

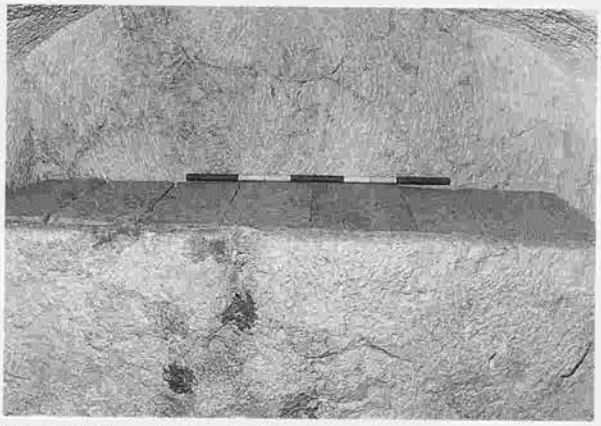


*Fig. 1.17. Cave 1, Chamber D – Arcosolium II with covered burial trough.*

*Fig. 1.18. Cave 1, Chamber D – Arcosolium III.*

*Fig. 1.19. Cave 1, Chamber D – Detail of mason's marks in Arcosolium II.*

chisel (see Fig. **1**.22). Trough I was covered by three large slabs, Trough III by five slabs and Trough II by seven. The first slab on Trough II, near the south corner, had a semi-circular recess on its side, designed to facilitate lifting during burial or bone collection (Fig. **1**.20). The other covering slabs of the trough had the first seven letters of the Hebrew alphabet (א, ב, ג, ד, ה, ו, ז) drawn in charcoal in consecutive order from left to right, one on each slab, except the last slab, bearing two letters (Fig. **1**.21). The letters could have indicated the proper order of the slabs on the trough, or may have had a magic significance.[4]

The burial troughs contained only fragmentary bones rather than undisturbed interments. However, like the loculi, they clearly served for primary burials, prior to the collection of the bones and their deposition in ossuaries. The absence of articulated bones in the troughs in this chamber may indicate that the bones of the deceased had already been collected into ossuaries. Some of the smallest bones were left in the troughs, perhaps due to neglect while collecting the bones for reburial.

The only other finds in the troughs were two glass vessels (Table **5**.1, Nos. 33, 34; Fig. **5**.1 and color plate) and a small green-glazed amphoriskos of Parthian origin (Fig. **4**.4 and color plate), found inside Trough I (Fig. **1**.22), all of the first century CE. These three unique vessels, especially the amphoriskos, which is of foreign origin and has no parallels in Second Temple period Jewish burials, may indicate the special status of the individual buried in the trough. It is difficult to explain why these rare and precious objects were left in the trough while the bones were collected.

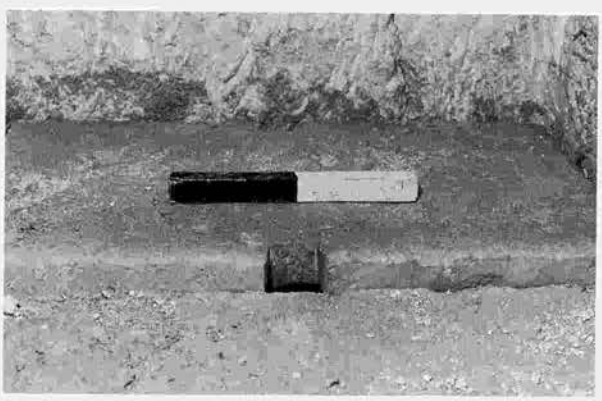


*Fig. 1.20. Cave 1, Chamber D – Detail of slab covering trough in Arcosolium II.*

A single ossuary (No. 8; Fig. **1**.16), containing collected bones, was found in the east corner of the chamber, near the entrance.

Chamber D was entirely free of accumulation; it had not been reused following the last burials of the Second Temple period, in contrast to Chambers A–C, which bore evidence of later use.


*Fig. 1.21. Cave 1, Chamber D – Hebrew letters on covering slabs of burial trough in Arcosolium II. (The spacing of the Hebrew letters in the transcription is not to scale.)*

*Fig. 1.22. Cave 1, Chamber D – Arcosolium I, glass and pottery vessels in burial trough.*

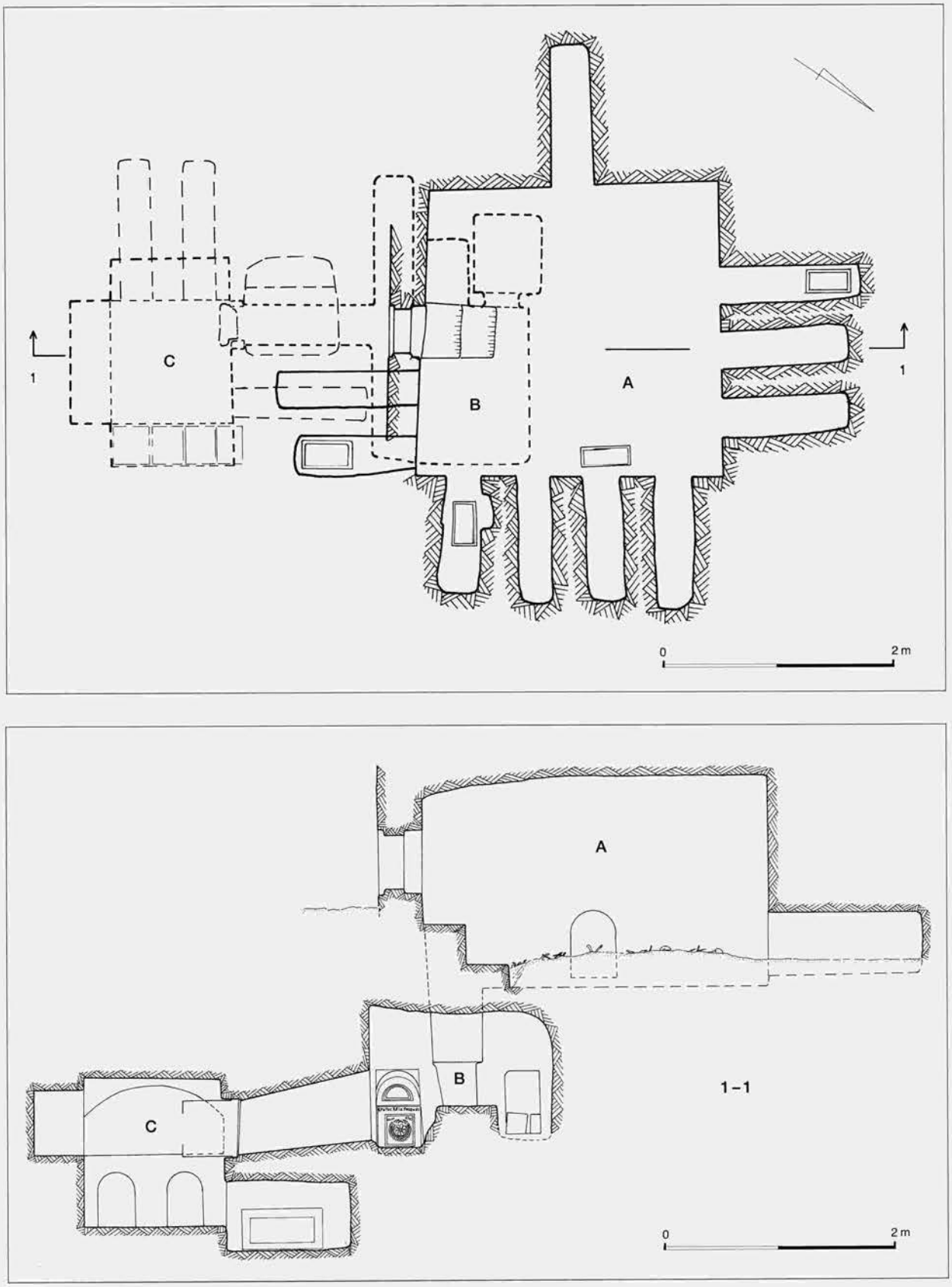
## Burial Cave 1 – Summary

The finds in Cave 1 indicate three burial phases:

a. The original phase, dating from the first century CE (possibly already the first century BCE, see above). The burials of this phase reflect the typical Jewish burial practices of that period, which included the interment of the deceased in loculi or troughs; and a secondary stage, probably a year later, in which the bones were collected into ossuaries (Kloner 1980:247–258; Rahmani 1981–1982:43–53).

b. A reuse of Chambers A–C for cremation burials in the Late Roman period. Evidence for such practices – cremated bones and patches of charcoal – was found mainly in Chambers B and C.

c. Additional use of Chamber A for inhumations in wooden coffins in the fifth–seventh centuries CE.



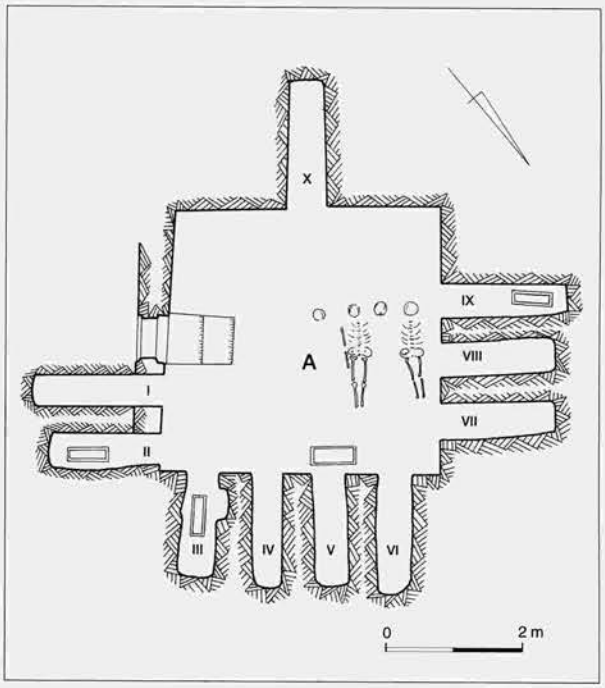

*Plan 1.6. Cave 2 – Plan and section.*

## Burial Cave 2 – The 'Eros' Family Tomb
(Plan **1**.6)

This tomb consists of a main chamber (A) with loculi, and two additional chambers at a lower level: a repository chamber (B) and a burial chamber with loculi and arcosolia (C).

The tomb was entered from the courtyard shared with Cave 1. The entrance (0.6 x 0.6 m) faced northwest and was found closed by a square blocking stone. Three steps descended from it to the floor of Chamber A (Fig. **1**.23).

*Fig. **1**.23. Cave 2, Chamber A – Southeast wall and entrance; on left – Loculi I–II.*




*Plan **1**.7. Cave 2 – Plan of Chamber A.*

*Fig. **1**.24. Cave 2, Chamber A – General view, looking west, with Loculi IX–X.*

### Chamber A (Plan **1**.7)

This nearly-square chamber (3.9 x 4.3 m; H 2.0–2.3 m; Figs. **1**.24, **1**.25) has ten long loculi cut in its walls: two (I–II; L 1.9 and 1.7 m, W 0.5–0.6 m) to the right of the opening; four (III–VI; L 1.6–1.9 m, W 0.45–0.6 m) in the northeast wall; and three (VII–IX; L 1.8–1.9 m, W 0.5 m) in the northwest wall. The single loculus (X) in the southwest wall is 2.0 m long. Here too, as in Cave 1, it seems that no additional loculi were hewn in the southwest wall of the chamber due to its proximity to the northeast loculi of Chamber C of Cave 1.

Some of the loculi had arched openings (Figs. **1**.25, **1**.26), while others were square. Several sealing slabs had been removed in antiquity and were found close by.

Four ossuaries were observed in this chamber – one each in Loculi II, III and IX, and one in front of Loculus V; all were covered by later accumulations. The chamber was not excavated and the ossuaries were not removed nor recorded.

A 0.5–0.8 m thick layer of accumulation, composed of a large quantity of crushed bones and wooden coffin fragments, was found on the floor, partially covering some of the ossuaries. On top of this accumulation several articulated skeletons were laid in individual wooden (cypress) coffins side by side (Fig. **1**.27). Traces of wooden coffins were also found in several of the loculi (Fig. **1**.26). All loculi contained skeletal remains, creating an accumulation of bones *c.* 0.3 m thick in each.

Chamber A was not excavated for technical reasons, which also prevented a systematic anthropological examination of the bones.

The artifacts collected from the upper level of the accumulation in the chamber included one Byzantine

*Fig. 1.25. Cave 2, Chamber A – General view, looking northwest, with Loculi V–IX.*

*Fig. 1.26. Cave 2, Chamber A – Loculus VII.*

*Fig. 1.27. Cave 2, Chamber A – The Byzantine burials; detail of northwest part of chamber.*

pear-shaped lamp (Figs. **1**.28, **4**.14:2), a Byzantine funnel-mouth glass bottle (Table **5**.1, No. 35), an iron bracelet (Chap. **7**) and a 213 CE coin (Chap. **6**, No. 10).

Chamber A was probably used for burial initially in the Second Temple period, with interment in loculi and subsequent bone collection into ossuaries; later, in the Byzantine period, the chamber served for mass burials, perhaps of monks who inhabited the Kidron Valley caves at that time (see below). Some of these were

individual burials in wooden coffins (cf. Kloner and Sivan 1976).

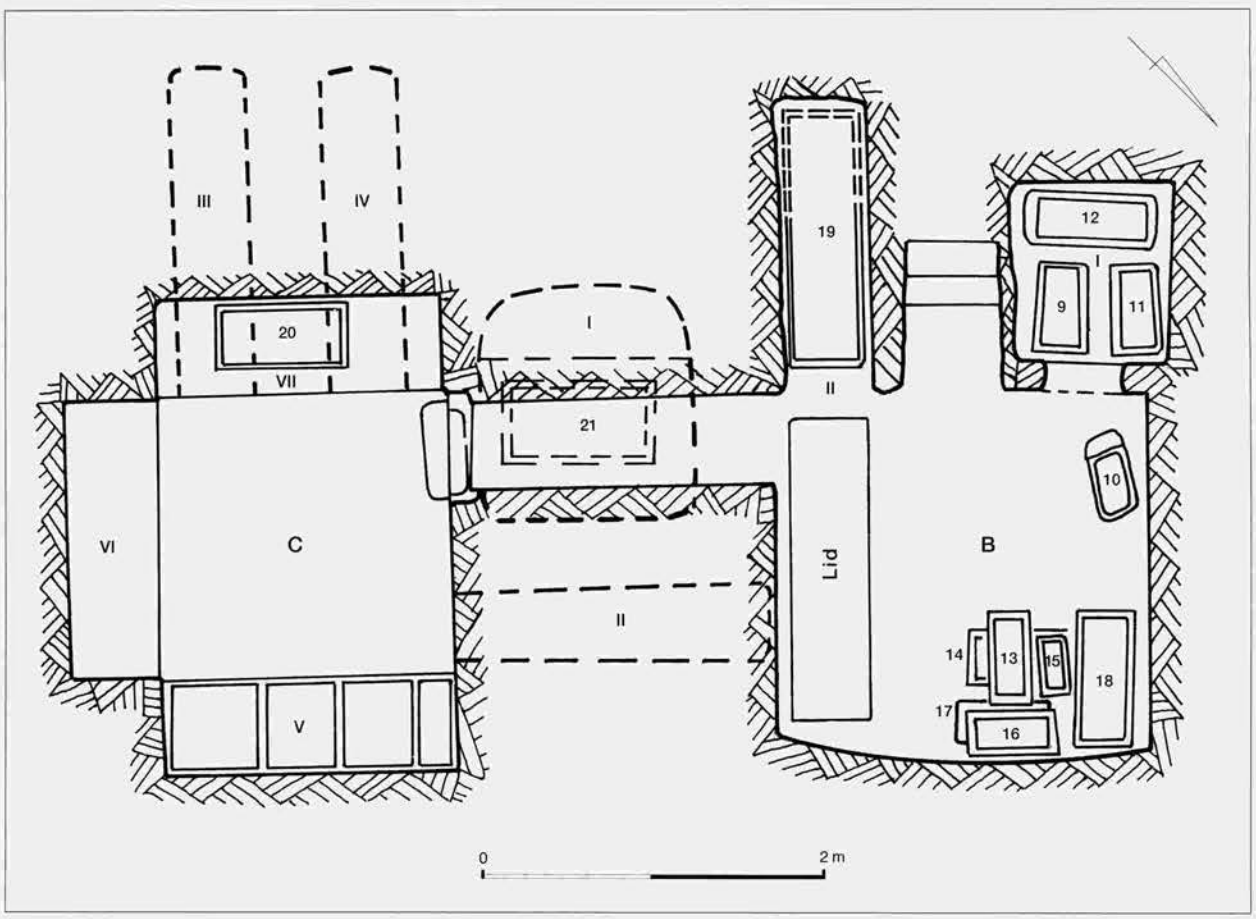
The presence of a 213 CE coin may indicate that this chamber was also used in the Late Roman period, like Chambers A–C in Cave 1.

*Fig. 1.28. Cave 2, Chamber A – Detail of wooden coffin fragments and Byzantine pear-shaped lamp (Fig. 4.14:2).*

**Chamber B** (Plan **1**.8)

Near the south corner of Chamber A, a rock-cut staircase in a square shaft (1.0 x 1.0 m) hewn in the floor, descended from west to east into Chamber B. This is a small, square (2.15 x 2.15 m) chamber on a lower level, which served as an ossuary repository. The walls were crudely hewn, in marked contrast to the careful workmanship of other burial chambers in the complex.

A small cell (I; 0.9 x 1.1 m), carved in the west corner, contained three decorated ossuaries placed side by side (Nos. 9, 11 and 12), all containing collected bones. Seven additional ossuaries were found in the chamber, stacked one on top of the other (10,13–18; Fig. **1**.29a). With the exception of Nos. 17 and 18, all contained collected bones. Their position and the fact that several were broken indicate that this chamber had been disturbed in antiquity, probably in the Late Roman or Byzantine period. The floor was covered with a layer of soil and bones which had spilled into the chamber from Chamber A. Six basins of the third–fifth centuries




*Plan 1.8. Cave 2 – Plan of Chambers B and C.*

*Fig. 1.29a. Cave 2, Chamber B – General view of north corner with ossuaries.*

CE, as well as Late Roman and Byzantine lamps, were found on and near some of the ossuaries; these included a rounded lamp, typical of the late first–third centuries CE, and three ''Ain Yabrud' lamps of the fifth–sixth centuries CE (see Appendix).

The chamber also yielded six glass beads of the Roman and Byzantine periods (Chap. **7**). A coin of 67 CE (No. 11) was discovered in Ossuary 9, perhaps the last manifestation of Jewish burial customs in the tomb (see below). Some bones in Ossuaries 9, 10, 12 and 14 bore evidence of cremation, probably indicating Late Roman reuse (see Table **8**.2).

One of the ossuaries found in this chamber is of special interest: it was larger than the rest, made of soft limestone and its narrow sides bore a schematic relief of a horned animal, possibly a bucranium (Chap. **2**, No. 17; Fig. **2**.12). A fine, deeply-incised inscription above the animal bears the artist's name and probably his place of origin: ΠΕΠΟΙΗΚΕΝ ΑΖΑ ΒΕΡΟΥΤΟC "Aza[ria] son of Berous (or of Beirut) has made (it)" (Chap. **3**, No. 7). Several other ossuaries in this tomb (Nos. 9–12, 15, 16, 18) were inscribed with Greek names. The name Eros (ΕΡΩC) appears several times, alluding to the possibility that this was the burial ground of the 'Eros' family, which had ties with the Syrian diaspora (see discussion below and Chap. **3**).

The single loculus in the chamber (II; 1.7 m long), hewn near the south corner, contained a sarcophagus of hard limestone (Chap. **2**, No. 19; Figs. **1**.29b–c). Its narrow side is decorated with a relief composed of wreaths and flowers, and bears a Greek inscription (Chap. **3**, No. 9). Its lid had been removed in antiquity, and was thrown across the chamber, near the passage to Chamber C.[5] The sarcophagus was dated to the first century CE on stylistic grounds (see Chap. **2**).

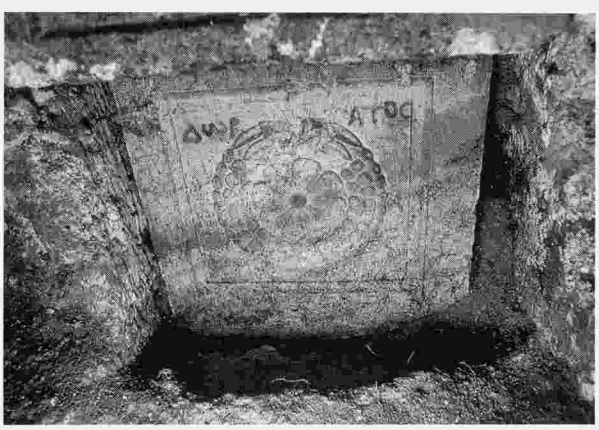


*Fig. 1.29b–c. Cave 2, Chamber B – The sarcophagus (No. 19).*

**Chamber C** (Plan **1**.8)

A narrow (L 1.85 m, W 0.60 m) passageway, hewn at the bottom of the southeast wall of Chamber B, led to Chamber C. Originally, this passageway may have been a loculus, later broadened to provide access to the back chamber. This alteration, as well as that in the passageway between Chambers C and D in Cave 1, was made in the original, Second Temple period burial phase.

Chamber C was entered through a small opening blocked by a hinged stone door (0.64 x 0.67 m, T 0.10 m), opening into the chamber (Figs. **1**.30, **1**.31). Two rounded pivots 5–8 cm long extended from the top and bottom of the door, fitting into rock-cut sockets in the threshold and the lintel. An iron locking device (Fig. **1**.32) in the center of the door was attached by staples set in lead (see Chap. **7**). The keyhole was placed 15 cm above the lock.

Chamber C is a small square chamber (1.7 x 1.7 m, H 1.6 m; Fig. **1**.33 and front cover). Three arcosolia (V–VII) were hewn in the upper part of the chamber walls. The northeast (V) and southwest (VII) arcosolia measured 1.6 x 0.7 m, while the southeast arcosolium (VI) was slightly larger (1.8 x 0.7 m). A burial trough covered with flat stone slabs was hewn in Arcosolium V (Fig. **1**.34), while Arcosolia VI and VII had flat shelves. Two loculi (III–IV; 0.45 x 1.90 m) were hewn under Arcosolium VII (see Fig. **1**.33), and a third (II; 0.50 x 1.85 m) near the north corner of the chamber (see Fig. **1**.30).

*Fig. 1.30. Cave 2, Chamber C – General view, looking northwest.*

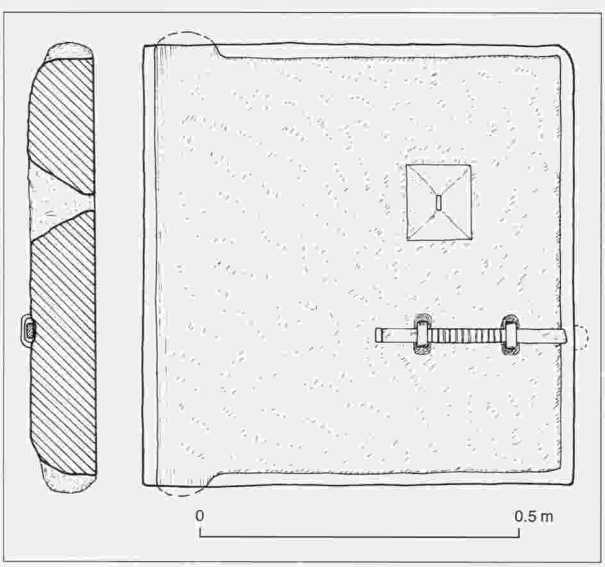



*Fig. 1.31. Cave 2, Chamber C – Drawing and section of stone door.*

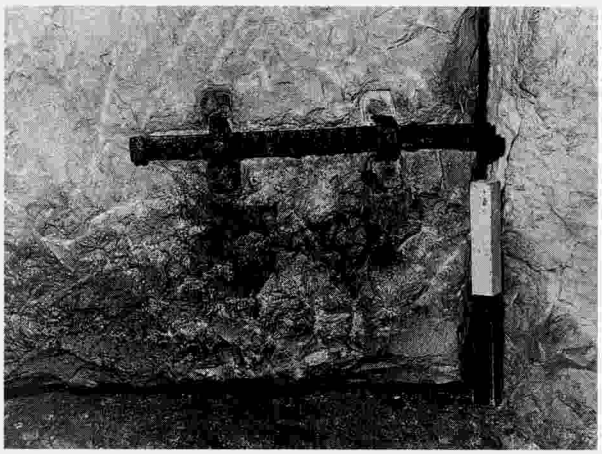


*Fig. 1.32. Cave 2, Chamber C – Detail of iron lock on door .*

A square opening, blocked by a rectangular stone, was found at floor level, under the entrance to the chamber, near the west corner. Removal of the stone revealed a small cell (I; 0.95 x 1.20 m), accommodating a magnificent ossuary of hard limestone, decorated with floral motifs in relief (Fig. **1**.35a–b and color plate; Chap. **2**, No. 21). Many collected bones were carefully arranged at one end of the ossuary (Fig. **1**.36; Table **8**.2). Due to technical difficulties the ossuary could not be removed from the cell.

A decorated ossuary (No. 20) was found *in situ*, though empty, on the shelf of Arcosolium VII (Fig. **1**.33).

The finds in Chamber C included three first century CE glass bottles (Table **5**.1, Nos. 36–38), three 'Beit Naṭṭif' lamps of the third–fifth centuries CE (Figs. **4**.11:2–3, **4**.12:4), three ''Ain Yabrud' lamps of the fifth–sixth centuries CE (Fig. **4**.13:6), a glass bracelet, a bronze bell (Chap. **7**), and a 271/272 CE coin (Chap. **6**, No. 12).

*Fig. 1.33. Cave 2, Chamber C – West corner: Arcosolium VII, Loculi III–IV and Cell I, with Ossuaries 20 and 21* in situ.

*Fig. 1.34. Cave 2, Chamber C – Northeast wall and Arcosolium V.*

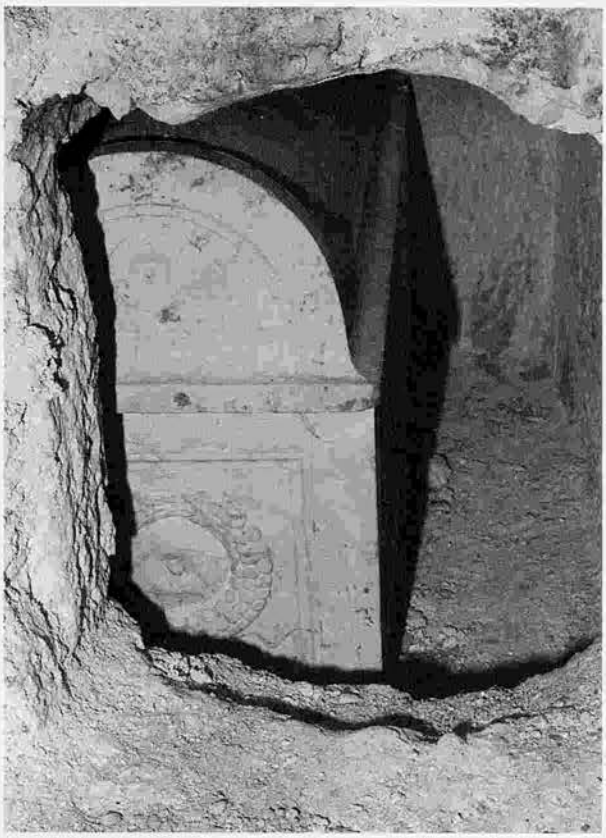


*Fig. 1.35a. Cave 2, Chamber C – Ossuary 21* in situ *in (lower) Cell I.*

*Fig. 1.35b. Cave 2, Chamber C – Detail of long side of Ossuary 21.*

*Fig. 1.36. Cave 2, Chamber C – Collected bones in Ossuary 21.*

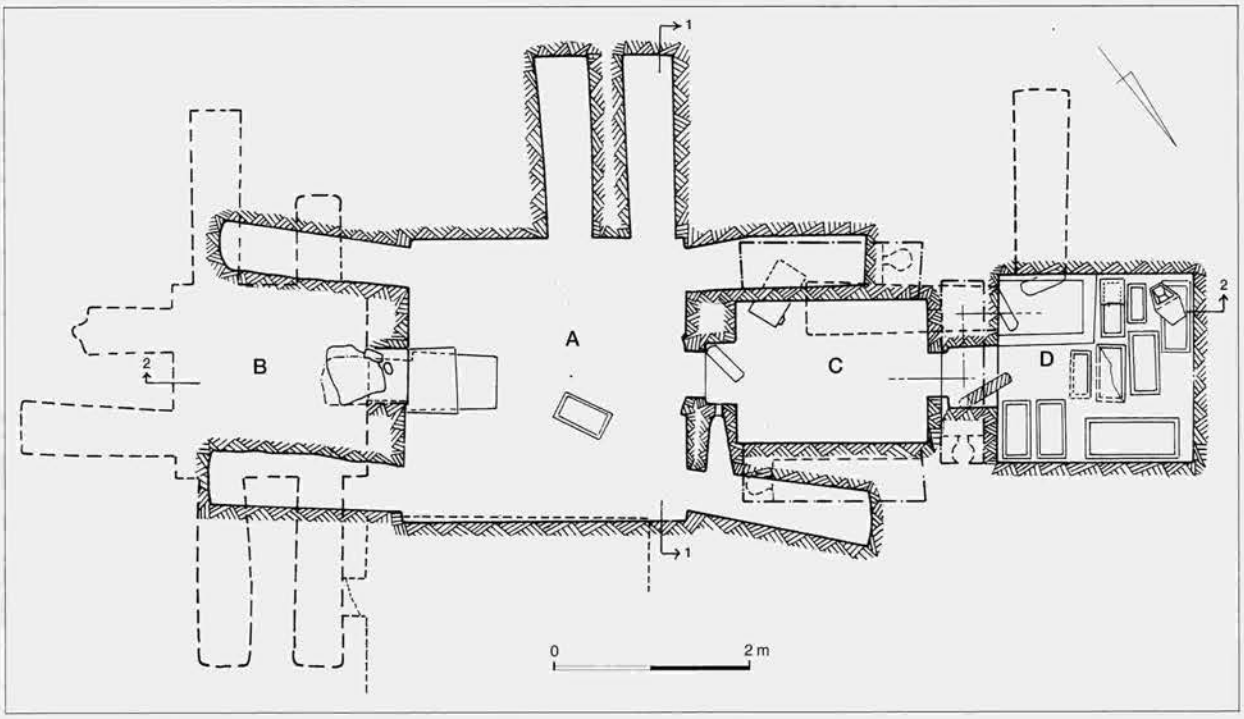
## Burial Cave 2 – Summary

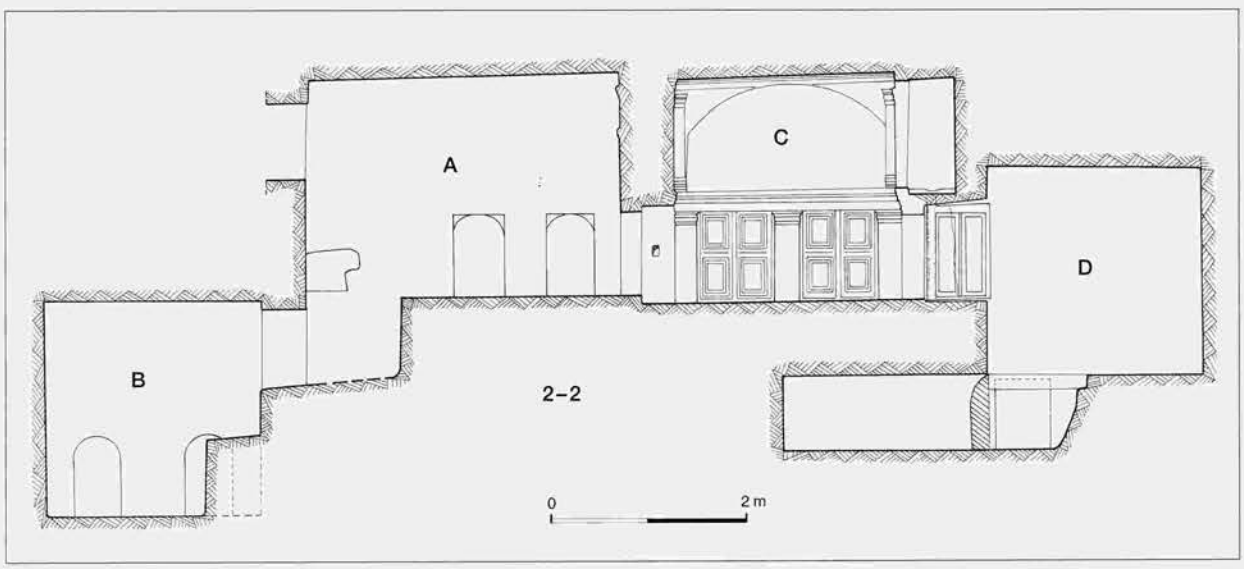
The evidence from Cave 2 indicates three periods of use:

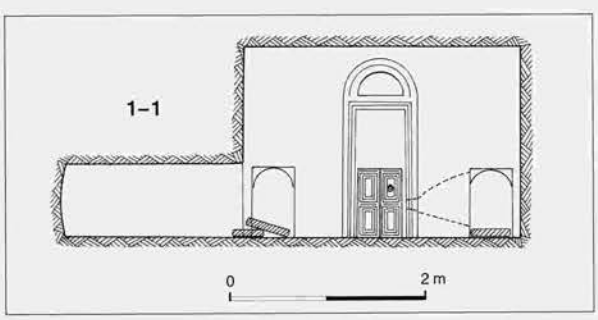
a. The original first century CE burials, in which the deceased were placed in loculi for primary burial, the bones later collected into ossuaries. The 67 CE coin found in Ossuary 9 of Chamber B suggests that this stage ended with the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE (but see also below).

b. Late Roman finds attest to the reuse of the cave.

c. Extensive inhumations in wooden coffins were uncovered in Chamber A; Byzantine artifacts found in the upper part of the accumulation date these to the fifth–seventh centuries CE. Other Byzantine artifacts were found in Chambers B and C.




*Plan 1.9. Cave 3 – Plan and sections.*

## Burial Cave 3 – The 'Ariston' Family Tomb (Plan 1.9)

This tomb was composed of four chambers: A and B with loculi; C – an elaborate passage with arcosolia and shallow burial troughs, and D – a back chamber used as an ossuary repository.

The tomb is located in close proximity to Cave 1, leaving only a thin rock wall between them. The original entrance to Cave 3 (see below) was blocked by an accumulation of earth and fill, and the excavators entered the cave through a narrow breach in the southeast wall of Chamber B in Cave 1.

### Chamber A (Plan 1.10)

The main chamber (2.85 x 2.85 m, H 2.00 m) has meticulously hewn walls, carefully smoothed with a fine chisel. The cracks and crevices in the rock were filled with plaster in order to create a smooth surface. The chamber (and the entire cave) was entered through an opening (0.60 x 0.80 m) hewn in the upper part of the southeast wall and blocked by a square stone. Two carved steps descended from the entrance to the floor. A passage to the lower burial chamber (B) was cut into the chamber floor and into part of the lower step, just below the entrance (Fig.1.37).

Six long loculi (1.80 x 0.50–0.55 m, H 0.70–0.80 m) were hewn in the chamber walls: two (I–II) flank the main entrance; two (III–IV) were hewn in the southwest wall (Fig. 1.38) and two (V–VI) in the northwest wall, flanking the passage to Chamber C. Square frames around the loculi openings (Fig. 1.37) were cut to accommodate the sealing slabs. Such local limestone slabs (0.50 x 0.70 m) were found scattered in the center of the chamber. One intact ossuary (No. 22), containing collected bones, was found on the floor, together with several plain ossuary fragments. Scattered on the floor were also several first century CE fragmentary pottery bowls, bottles and cooking pots (see Appendix), as well as two glass candlestick-type bottles of the Late Roman period (Table 5.1: Nos. 39, 40). The dispersion of the finds in this chamber indicates disturbance of the tomb in antiquity.

*Fig. 1.37. Cave 3, Chamber A – The main entrance to the cave (top), the passage to Chamber B (bottom), and Loculi I–II, looking southeast.*

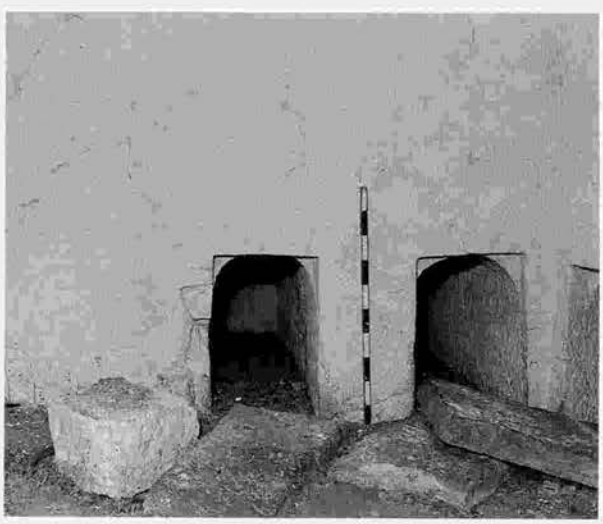
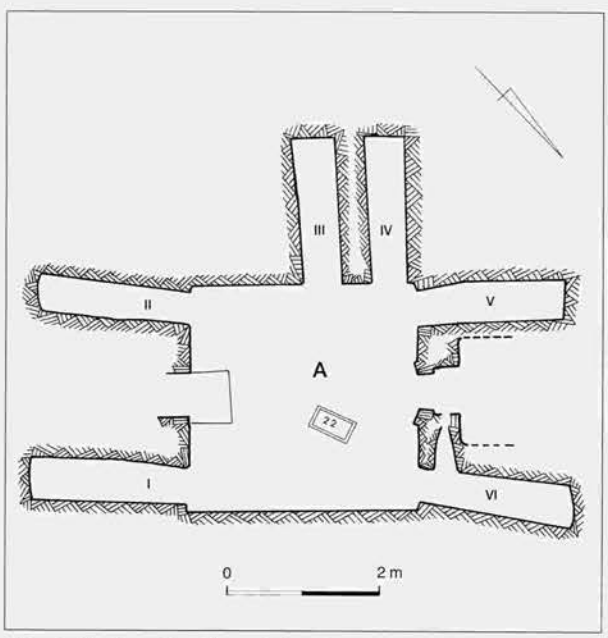


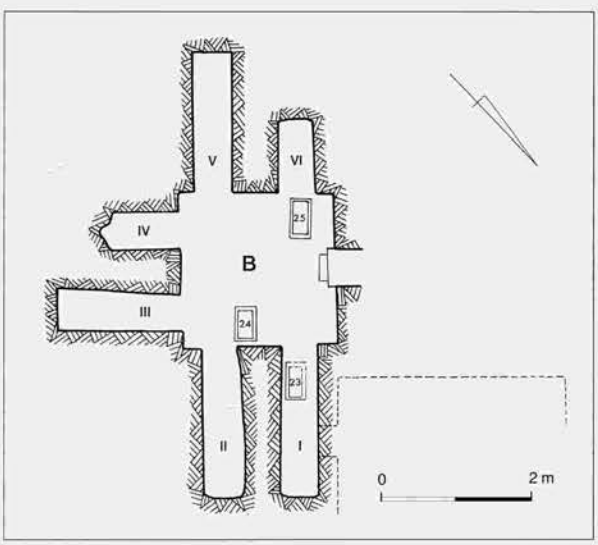
*Fig. 1.38. Cave 3, Chamber A – Southwest wall with Loculi III–IV.*




*Plan 1.10. Cave 3 – Plan of Chamber A.*

**Chamber B** (Plan **1**.11)

Chamber B (1.96 x 1.92 m, H 1.70 m) was hewn southeast of Chamber A, on a lower level. Its entrance (0.6 x 0.7 m) was cut just under the ceiling, and two steps led down to the chamber floor (Fig. **1**.39). An accumulation of earth and small stones, which had penetrated the chamber through the entrance, covered the floor. The chamber (Fig. **1**.40) had six rock-cut loculi: two in each wall, except the entrance wall. Four were long (I,II,III,V; 0.50 x 1.80 m) and two were shorter (IV,VI; 0.45 x 0.80 m). The latter apparently served as repositories rather than for primary burial. Loculus I was reached from Cave 1 through a breach (enlarged by the excavators), indicating that Cave 3 was probably hewn before Cave 1 (see above). The stone-cutting in the hard limestone of Chamber B was strikingly inferior to the craftsmanship evidenced in Chambers A and C: the angles between walls and ceiling were coarsely finished and the walls were not smoothed as in the other chambers.




*Plan **1**.11. Cave 3 – Plan of Chamber B.*

Two intact ossuaries were recovered on the chamber floor: No. 25, to the right of the entrance near the west corner (Fig. **1**.41), was empty, and No. 24, located between Loculi I and II (Fig. **1**.42). Fragments of Ossuary 23 were found in Loculus I.

The only artifacts collected in this chamber were fragments of a store jar and a cooking pot, both dated to the first century CE (see Appendix) and fragments of glass candlestick-type bottles. Fragments of two or three glass candlestick-type bottles were found in Ossuary 24 (Table **5**.1), together with cremated bones (Fig. **1**.42),

*Fig. **1**.39. Cave 3, Chamber B – Entrance from Chamber A.*

*Fig. **1**.40. Cave 3, Chamber B – Southeast wall and Loculi III–V.*

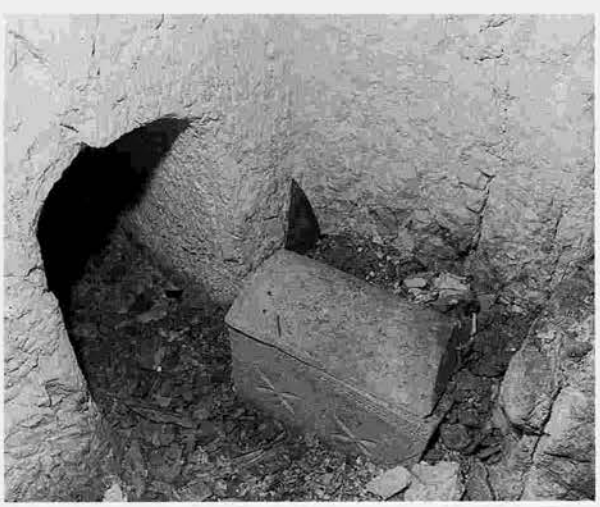


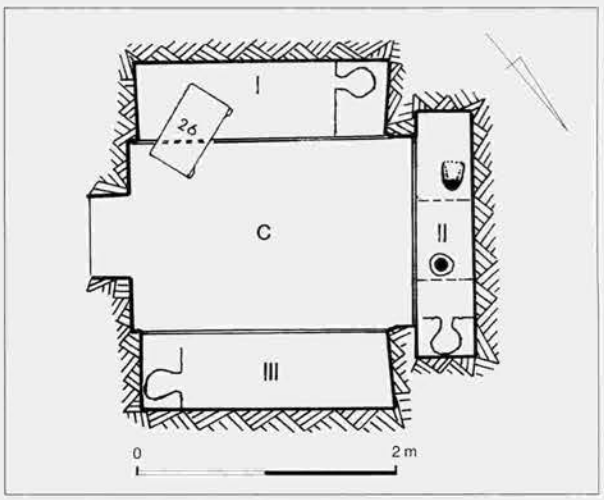
*Fig. **1**.41. Cave 3, Chamber B – West corner and Ossuary 25.*

*Fig. 1.42. Cave 3, Chamber B – Northeast wall, Loculi I–II and Ossuary 24.*

attesting to a secondary use of the ossuary in the Late Roman period. Concentrations of bones were found on the floor and at the loculi openings. These remains may have originally been collected in the ossuaries, and were later removed and scattered in the chamber, so that the ossuaries could be used as receptacles for cremated bones.

**Chamber C** (Plan **1**.12; see Plan **1**.9, sections)

To the northwest of Chamber A, opposite the main entrance to the cave, an elegant passage led to Chamber C (see color plate), the most elaborate burial chamber in this tomb. The northwest wall of Chamber A was carefully hewn and smoothed, creating a flat rock face.




*Plan 1.12. Cave 3 – Plan of Chamber C.*

*Fig. 1.43. Cave 3, Chamber A – Northwest wall, Loculi V–VI and entrance to Chamber C.*

The entrance to Chamber C (0.60 x 0.80 m) was adorned by a rectangular recessed frame (0.70 x 1.40 m) in low relief, topped by an arch (Fig. **1**.43; see Plan **1**.9, Section 1–1). This entrance was closed by a pivoting stone door (0.58 x 0.80 m), opening into the chamber (Fig. **1**.44). Four rectangular panels were carved in sunken relief on the door, in imitation of a panelled wooden door (see below). A representation of a large rounded doorknocker suspended from a hook was carved in the upper right-hand panel (Fig. **1**.45). The door was locked by an elongated stone that was inserted into it through a narrow rock-cut crevice (0.20 x 0.65 m), which connected Loculus VI in Chamber A and the entrance to Chamber C (see Plan **1**.10).

*Fig. 1.44. Cave 3, Chamber A – Stone door leading to Chamber C.*

*Fig. 1.45. Cave 3, Chamber A – Detail of stone door leading to Chamber C.*

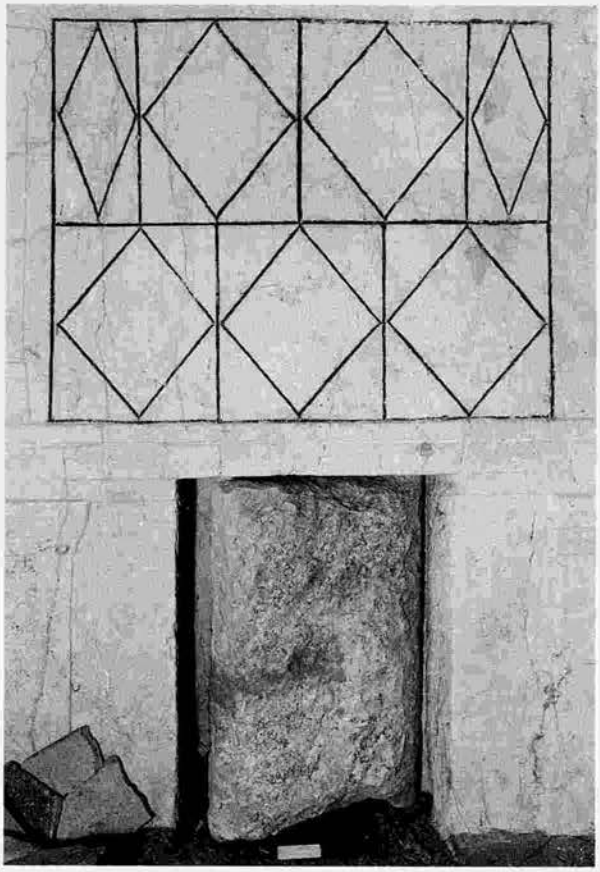


*Fig. 1.46. Cave 3, Chamber C – Southeast wall and entrance from Chamber A.*

The rectangular chamber, C (1.48 x 1.92 m, H 2 m), also served as a passage from Chamber A to Chamber D and thus had two openings: one into Chamber A, in the southeast wall (Figs. **1**.46, **1**.47 and color plate) and another into Chamber D, in the northwest wall (Fig. **1**.48 and color plate). The walls were meticulously smoothed using a wide chisel, and elaborately decorated (see below).

Three arcosolia (0.60 x 1.80 m) with shallow burial troughs were carved in the southwest (Arcosolium I), northwest (II) and northeast (III) walls (Figs. **1**.49, **1**.48, **1**.50 respectively and color plate). The troughs were

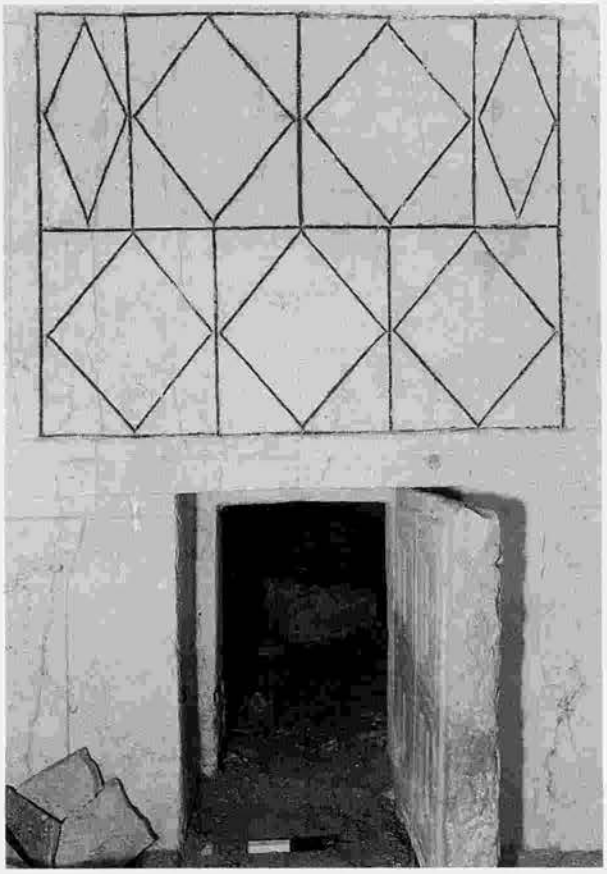


*Fig. 1.47. Cave 3, Chamber C – Southeast wall and entrance from Chamber A.*

*c.* 0.1 m deep, allowing room for a single burial, and each had a carved rounded headrest at one end (Fig. **1**.51; cf. Kloner 1980:233). The orientation of the headrests in the troughs was clockwise: the headrest of Trough I was in the west, that of Trough II in the north, and that of Trough III in the east. The shallowness of the troughs precluded the possibility that the bodies had been covered with stone slabs, as was the case in the deeper troughs of Chamber C in Cave 2 and Chamber D in Cave 1.

The decoration of the walls comprised incised geometric designs painted red, and architectural elements carved in low relief (see color plates). The southeast wall, above the passage from Chamber A, bore a delicate incised pattern (1.40 x 1.20 m) of lozenges and rectangles, painted dark red (Figs. **1**.46, **1**.47, and color plates).

Delicate pilasters carved in low relief in the four corners of the chamber flanked the arcosolia, with capitals imitating pseudo-Doric ones (Figs. **1**.48–**1**.50, **1**.52 and color plates; see Plan **1**.9, Section 2–2). Above the columns a continuous frieze in low relief was composed of three *fasciae*.

Under the arcosolia were rectangular panels, carved in sunken relief, similar to the panels decorating the chamber door and probably imitating wooden doors. The southwest and northeast walls had two such 'doors', each composed of a set of four rectangular frames, painted dark red. Flanking these 'doors' were fine pilasters with pseudo-Doric capitals carved in relief, and profiled bases. Above these runs another frieze in low relief consisting of three *fasciae*.

A single empty ossuary (No. 26) was found in Trough I (Fig. **1**.49), and several ossuary fragments were recovered on the floor (Fig. **1**.53); these may have been removed from the ossuary repository in Chamber D (see below), and then shattered on the floor of Chamber C.

Fragmentary bones were found scattered on the floor and in the arcosolia and an intact spatulated lamp was found in Arcosolium I (Figs. **1**.54, **4**.8:2).

*Figs. 1.48. Cave 3, Chamber C – Northwest wall, passage to Chamber D and Arcosolium II.*

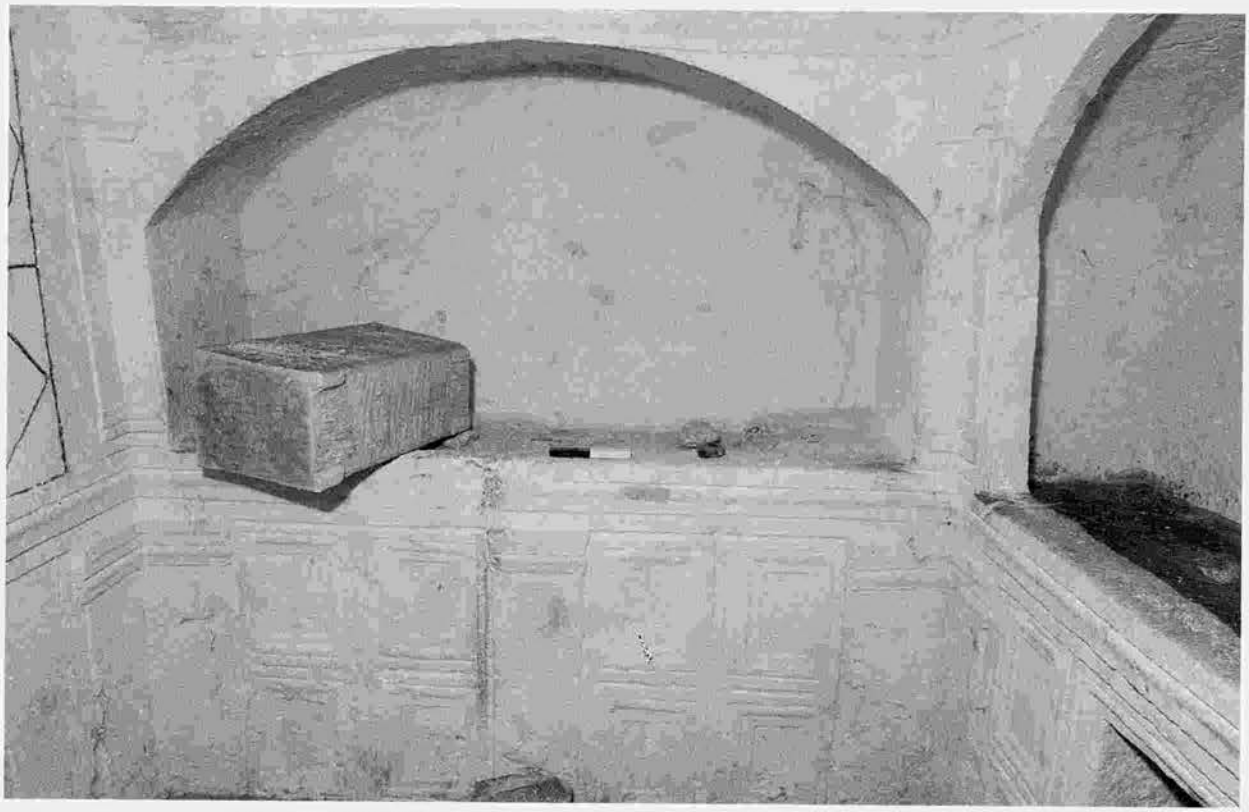


*Fig. 1.49. Cave 3, Chamber C – Southwest wall, Arcosolium I and Ossuary 26* in situ.

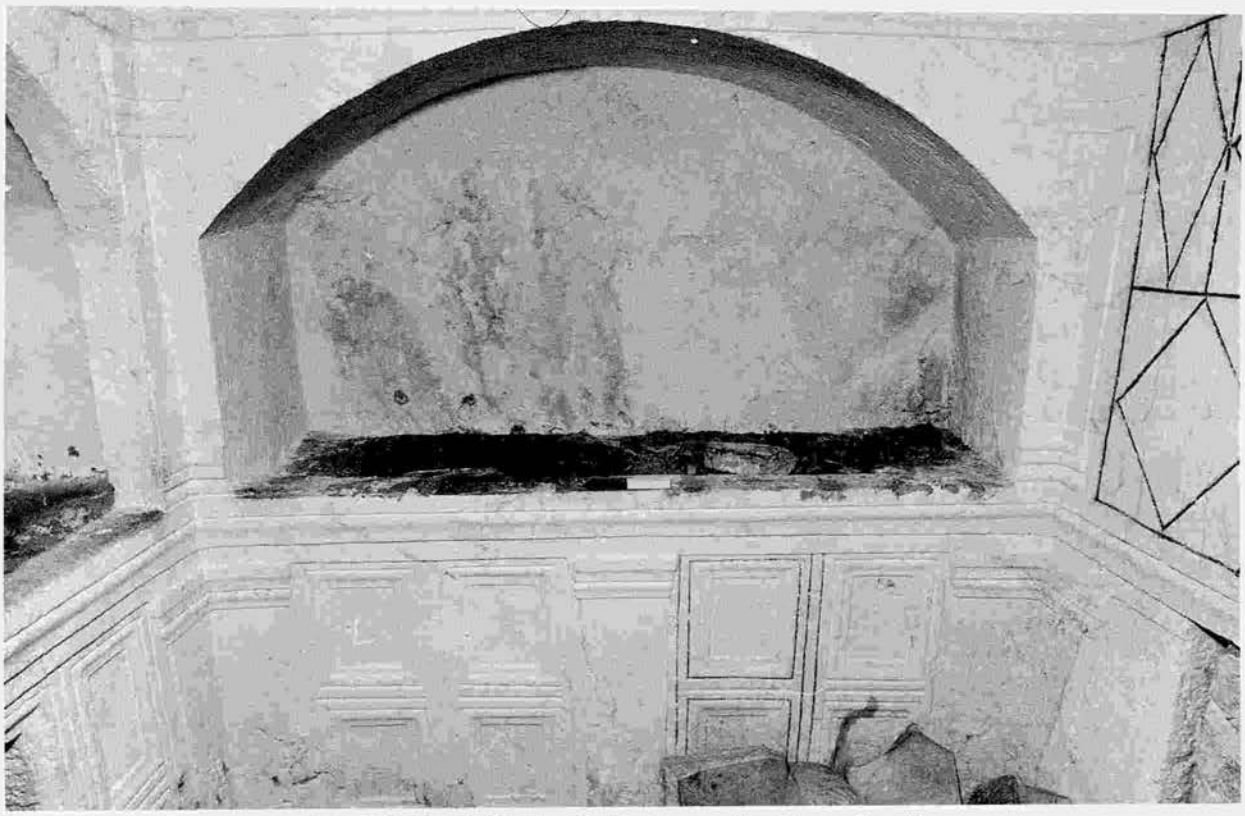


*Fig. 1.50. Cave 3, Chamber C – Northeast wall and Arcosolium III.*

*Fig. 1.51. Cave 3, Chamber C – Detail of headrest in Arcosolium I.*

*Fig. 1.52. Cave 3, Chamber C – Pilaster in north corner.*

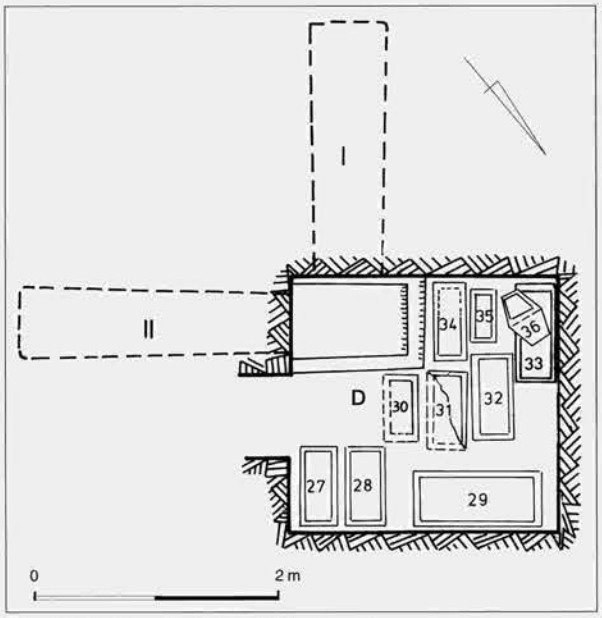
*Fig. 1.53. Cave 3, Chamber C – East corner with broken ossuaries.*

*Fig. 1.54. Cave 3, Chamber C – Spatulated lamp (Fig. 4.8:2) in Trough I.*

**Chamber D** (Plan **1**.13)

The entrance to Chamber D was carved in the northwest wall of Chamber C. It was closed by a pivoting stone door, identical to the door connecting Chambers A and C (Figs. **1**.48, **1**.55). The upper stone hinge of the door was set into a socket which penetrated Trough II in Chamber C. The door was locked through a narrow slanted opening in Trough II (Fig. **1**.56).

Chamber D, the back room of the tomb, was used as an ossuary repository. The square chamber (1.90 x 1.96 m, H 1.90 m) contained eleven ossuaries (Nos. 27–37) stacked one on top of the other (Figs. **1**.57, **1**.58). Some of the ossuaries were broken and in disarray. Only Ossuaries 28 and 30 contained bones. A rectangular depression in the floor in the south corner of the chamber gave access to two long loculi (I–II, 0.60 x 1.90 m; Fig. **1**.59). The loculi were found blocked by rectangular stone slabs, which had been secured with plaster to the wall. Remains of collected bones were found in the loculi.




*Plan **1**.13. Cave 3 – Plan of Chamber D.*

*Fig. **1**.55. Cave 3, Chamber D – Passage to Chamber C, looking southeast.*

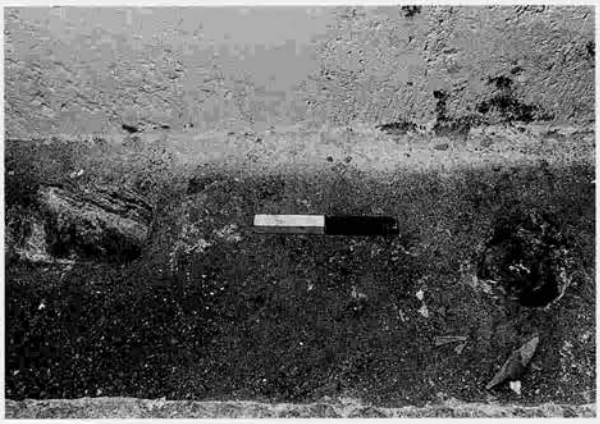


*Fig. **1**.56. Cave 3, Chamber C – Trough II. Note the slanted opening and the hinge of the stone door to Chamber D protruding into the trough.*

*Fig. **1**.57. Cave 3, Chamber D – The ossuary repository, looking northwest.*

*Fig. 1.58. Cave 3, Chamber D – The ossuary repository, looking northeast.*

*Fig. 1.59. Cave 3, Chamber D – South corner with openings to Loculi I and II.*

## Burial Cave 3 – Summary

Two distinct periods of use can be identified in Cave 3:
a. The original, first century CE phase, probably ending with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Judging from the difference in style and elaboration between Chambers B and C, this phase may have had two subphases: (1) The initial quarrying of the cave, in the characteristic style of Jewish burial caves of the Second Temple period. The rough execution of Chamber B may indicate that the cave in its original stage was not outstanding, neither in design nor in decoration. (2) Improvements and elaborate decorations of Chamber C and the northwest wall of Chamber A possibly indicate a change in ownership in the first century CE (see below).
b. Reuse in the Late Roman period, attested mainly in Chamber B, where cremation burials in ossuaries were found in association with second–third centuries CE glass candlestick-type bottles. These burials may have caused the disturbance of the ossuaries in Chamber D.

Cave 3 yielded a total of sixteen complete ossuaries of various types and several ossuary fragments; twelve of these (Nos. 22–29, 31, 33–35) bore Hebrew and/or Greek inscriptions. Most of the ossuaries bore simple, common designs, such as variations of the rosette motif enclosed by panels; several were painted red, yellow and orange (Chap. **2**).

Analysis of the ossuary inscriptions (Chap. **3**) indicates that the majority of the deceased buried here belonged to one family. One smashed ossuary (No. 31) bore Hebrew and Greek names, apparently including the name of the family founder, אפמי ארסטון ('Ariston of Apamea'; Chap. **3**, No. 19). The wealthy Jewish 'Ariston' family, originating from Apamea in Syria, settled in Jerusalem in the first century CE (see discussion below). The outstanding craftsmanship and decoration in Chamber C, contrasting with the other chambers in this cave, suggest that the 'Ariston' family may have purchased an existing burial cave, in a choice location in the Jerusalem necropolis, and renovated it in the style of some of the most elaborate burial caves in the Jerusalem necropolis of the Second Temple period.

## Architecture and Ornamentation

The three late Second Temple period burial caves under discussion, together with a number of contemporaneous tombs in their vicinity (e.g. Dalman 1939; Kloner 1980:60–66), feature some of the finest examples of tomb architecture and ornamentation in the Jerusalem necropolis. All three burial caves had been meticulously carved in the hard limestone formation, and excel in their precise angles and fine finish. The unique decorative features in the caves, mainly in Cave 3, as well as the high quality of workmanship, indicate that these were the burial caves of some of the more affluent Jewish families of the city.

Each of the tombs comprises a main burial chamber with loculi – Cave 1 provided with an entrance chamber as well – and a back chamber with arcosolia. The arcosolia in Chamber D of Cave 1 and in Chamber C of Cave 2 contained deep burial troughs, while those in Chamber C of Cave 3 had shelves with shallow burial troughs. Caves 2 and 3 also had chambers designated as ossuary repositories (cf. Avigad 1962).

The chambers were usually separated by 0.5–0.7 m thick rock walls and connected by small openings (0.45–0.60 x 0.60–0.70 m). The openings of the loculi were either rectangular or arched, sometimes molded to fit the sealing stone. Some of these sealing stones (0.45–0.50 x 0.60–0.70 m) were found in the chambers (e.g. in Chamber A of Cave 3). Others had probably been removed in later periods.

This architectural concept – back chambers with arcosolia and shelves for ossuaries, or burial troughs for primary burial – though rare in Second Temple period tombs, does have analogies in some of the elaborate tombs of the Jerusalem necropolis (Kloner 1980:232–234), e.g., the Bene Ḥezir Tomb in the Kidron Valley (Avigad 1954:37–78), the 'Sanhedrin Tombs' (Jotham-Rothschild 1952;1954; Rahmani 1961:93–104), the 'Tombs of the Kings' (Kon 1947), the 'Eshkolot Tomb' (Macalister 1900b; Kloner 1980:180–181), and others (Kloner 1980:128, No. 7-26; 182–184, No. 9-26; 203–204, No. 19-29). An ornate first century CE burial cave excavated at Ḥorvat Midras in the Judean Shephelah (Kloner 1978) also has a back chamber fitted with arcosolia.

The custom of using troughs for primary burials in Jewish burial caves in Jerusalem seems to have been introduced late in the Second Temple period, probably around the mid-first century CE (Kloner 1980:235). Arcosolia and burial troughs were uncovered in several burial caves near the Akeldama tombs, in the lower Kidron and Hinnom Valleys (Macalister 1900a; 1901:147–151) as well as on the west slopes of the Mt. of Olives (Vincent 1902). They were common throughout the country in the third century CE, and constituted the predominant architectural form for primary interment in the Bet She'arim necropolis (Avigad 1976:259–261).

Thus, the arcosolia with burial troughs in Caves 1 and 2, which appear to have been hewn during the original use of the tombs, may indicate that these caves were among the latest to be hewn in the Second Temple period in Jerusalem.

The occurrence of headrests in Second Temple burial caves is also fairly rare, and they are found only as a decorative element (e.g. Schick 1892b; Kloner 1980:27, No. 3-23; 69, No. 11-27). The origin of this custom may go back to rock-cut headrests in First Temple period burial caves in Jerusalem (Barkay and Kloner 1986).

Caves 2 and 3 have some outstanding architectural and ornamental features, the most exceptional being the pivoting stone doors. One of these, at the entrance to the back chamber (C) of Cave 2, had its iron locking device still *in situ*. Judging from the perfect setting of the stone door in the chamber wall, it appears to have been installed in the original, Second Temple period burial phase. However, as this tomb offers evidence of reuse in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, the door could have seemingly been a later addition. Two pivoting stone doors served both entrances of Chamber C of Cave 3. Their decorative style and the fact that this chamber contained no clear evidence of later reuse, indicate that the stone doors indeed date to the original burial phase of the Second Temple period. Fragments of another stone door, with its iron locking device nearby, were found in Chamber A of Cave 1.

Pivoting stone doors are found in burial contexts only in the largest and most elaborate tombs of the Second Temple period (e.g. the 'Tombs of the Kings'; Kon 1947:68–70). They became more frequent in the Late Roman period and oft-occur in the burial caves at Bet She'arim (Mazar 1973:221–222). To date, no other doors with their entire locking device *in situ*, such as in Cave 2, have been reported.[6]

Depictions of decorated doors appear on the facades of several tombs documented in this area at the turn of the century (Clermont-Ganneau 1899:298; Macalister 1900a; 1901), as well as in a cave extensively described by Dalman (1939). Depictions of monumental facades and doors were also favored on some ossuaries (e.g.

Avigad 1967:139, Fig. 31; Bahat 1982:36, Pl. 9:5; Kloner 1984; and cf. Rahmani 1994:28–30, 45–47).

The four stone doors in the Akeldama caves thus provide additional evidence for the use of this type of closing device as early as the Second Temple period.

Decorative architectural elements and other ornamentations occur chiefly in Chamber C of Cave 3. The closest parallels to the exceptional ornaments of this chamber may be found in some of the remarkable caves of the Hinnom and Kidron Valleys (Macalister 1900a; 1901; Dalman 1939; Avigad 1967:126–129; Kloner 1980:60–66). The elaborate decoration, including the panels carved on the stone doors and walls in an apparent attempt to imitate wooden doors, emphasizes the attention paid to non-functional details. The rare combination of incision and red paint on the inner wall of this chamber may be paralleled to the incised and painted geometric designs in a loculi tomb near 'Abud in Samaria, which possibly dates from the Second Temple period (Conder and Kitchener 1882:362–364). Similar red-painted geometric decorations were found in the Kidron Valley caves inhabited by hermits (Ussishkin 1993:144–146), and dated to the Byzantine period. A design of red-painted triangles enclosed in a frame was partly documented in a tomb near the 'Sanhedrin Tombs' (Macalister 1904:256), which however may well be Byzantine.

The pilasters and pseudo-Doric capitals in low relief flanking the arcosolia in Chamber C of Cave 3 resemble the more elaborate facades of Second Temple period tombs in Jerusalem, such as the 'Frieze Tomb' (Macalister 1902a; Vincent 1901; Avigad 1956:339). Pseudo-Doric columns, capitals and friezes in low relief were also carved on the walls of the burial cave on the west slopes of the Mt. of Olives (Vincent 1902:107), as well as in a tomb in the new section of the Silwan village (Avigad 1967:126–129).

A possible clue to the occurrence of these decorative schemes and the high standard of workmanship evidenced in Chamber C of Cave 3 may be found in the identity of the cave owners – a wealthy Jewish family from Syria. Having purchased an existing burial cave, they renovated it according to their standards, possibly even employing foreign craftsmen and artists (see below and Chap. **3**). One of these may have been Azaria from Beirut, whose name appears on the exceptional Ossuary 17 recovered in Cave 2 (see above and Chap. **3**).

Should the origins of the decorative style in Cave 3 be sought in the Jewish tradition of the Second Temple period in Jerusalem, or rather, in North Syrian funerary architecture (e.g. in Palmyra, see Gawlikowski 1970; Browning 1979:192–213)? This issue will definitely gain from future discoveries and further discussion.

## Periods of Use and Burial Customs

### Phase A: Second Temple Period Jewish Burials

The burial customs and the numerous inscriptions on the ossuaries (Chap. **3**) attest to the Jewish identity of the tombs' owners. The architectural style and the abundant finds in the tombs (see below and Chaps. **2–7**) indicate clearly that they were originally used for Jewish interments in the first century CE. Some of the ceramic and numismatic finds from the lower strata of accumulation in Chamber A of Cave 1 may, however, indicate that burial here had commenced as early as the mid-first century BCE (see Fig. **4**.1; Chap. **6**, No. 7). Chamber A may have been the first to be hewn, while the inner chambers of Cave 1 were added several decades later. We should not, however, disregard the possibility that the early finds had penetrated the chamber from outside, as they were largely clustered in one corner and included only fragmentary domestic vessels such as bowls, store jars and cooking pots, lacking lamps or small containers – the most common finds in contemporary tombs (cf. Jason's tomb, Rahmani 1967b:75–88).

Although most of the finds in Cave 2 date from the secondary phases of use – the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (see below) – the architectural style of the cave and the fact that numerous ossuaries were found in the repository (Chamber B), leave no doubt that it too was hewn and used in the first century CE. The 67 CE coin recovered in Ossuary 9 of Chamber B, and the first century CE glass bottles from Chamber C, corroborate this dating.

The finds in Cave 3 consisted mainly of pottery vessels, including a spatulated oil lamp from Chamber C, all dated to the first century CE, attesting to the cave's original period of use. Evidence for later use of this cave was found chiefly in Chamber B (see below).

Reconstruction of the architectural phases in the complex indicates that Chambers B, C, and D of Cave 1 were hewn later than the adjacent Cave 3. This is evident in Chamber B of Cave 1, where an attempt to add loculi damaged the thin rock wall separating this chamber from Cave 3 and had to be abandoned when one of the loculi in Chamber B of Cave 3 was damaged.

Thus clearly Cave 3 was hewn prior to the back chambers in Cave 1. The presence of arcosolia and burial troughs, which were first introduced in Jerusalem tombs in the mid-first century CE (see above), indicates that the caves reached their final form around that time, probably serving for Jewish burials until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

If indeed the burial caves at Akeldama attained their final shape gradually in the course of the first century BCE and the first century CE, some stages in their development can be reconstructed: Loculus XIV in Chamber C of Cave 1 was enlarged at some time to create the passage to Chamber D. A loculus in Chamber B of Cave 2 was transformed into the passage to Chamber C. The striking difference in design and craftsmanship between Chambers B and C of Cave 3 also suggests two stages of development.

Thus it is possible to reconstruct within Phase A two stages of development: the first, dated to the first century BCE or the early first century CE, included the construction of Cave 3 in its original rough form, the quarrying of Chambers A, B (and perhaps C) in Cave 1, and Chambers A and B in Cave 2. The second stage, dated to the first century CE and ending in 70 CE (see below), included the restructuring and decoration of Chambers A and C in Cave 3, and the construction of Chamber D in Cave 1 and Chamber C in Cave 2. However, the artifactual and stratigraphic evidence is insufficient to prove this division. There is also a possibility that the entire complex was constructed as one unit in a relatively short period of time in the first century CE, and the development suggested above could be merely technical.

The predominant burial custom in all three tombs during this phase was typical of Late Second Temple period Jewish tombs: primary interment in loculi and secondary bone collection into ossuaries (Kloner 1980:247–253; see Rahmani 1981–1982:109–119 for various interpretations of the origin and development of this custom). Many ossuaries indeed contained collected bones and additional bones were found in some of the loculi and in the arcosolia of Chamber D in Cave 1 – indicating that bone collection into ossuaries was extensively practised in the caves.

With the exception of Nos. 9 and 24, no artifacts were found in the ossuaries. Ossuary 9 contained a 67 CE coin and Ossuary 24 – fragments of candlestick-type glass bottles which do not seem to belong to the original burial phase in the ossuaries (see below and Chap. **5**). However, it should be borne in mind that the caves (and ossuaries) were later reused and that valuables they possibly had contained may have been looted.

The most intensive burial activities in the lower Kidron Valley occurred in the mid-first century CE, a time that evidenced the hewing of the elaborate tombs at the confluence of the Hinnom and Kidron Valleys (Kloner 1980:66). The fine ossuaries and superb sarcophagus from Cave 2, as well as the richly decorated arcosolia chamber (C) in Cave 3, attest to the affluence of the tombs' owners.

The cessation of Jewish burial in the caves should probably be assigned to 70 CE, as in other tombs in the lower Kidron Valley (including the occurrence of several unfinished caves, Kloner 1980:66–88). The presence of some vessels of the late first and early second centuries CE (Figs. **4**.3:7–8, **4**.5:5–8) could indicate that sporadic Jewish burials in the tombs occurred after the destruction of the Second Temple. However, it seems more feasible that these pottery vessels reflect the subsequent, Late Roman, pagan reuse of the tombs (see below and cf. Avni 1993). Thus, the 67 CE coin found in Ossuary 9 may represent the last years of Jewish use of the tombs.

Some characteristics of the Second Temple period Jerusalemite families buried in the Akeldama caves can be reconstructed by means of the numerous inscriptions on the ossuaries (Chap. **3**). Caves 2 and 3 – which yielded ossuaries inscribed with several Greek names previously unattested in the Jerusalem onomasticon of this period – were owned by two Jewish families, both originally from North Syria: the 'Eros' family and the 'Ariston' family, which probably came to Jerusalem from Apamea in Syria (Chap. **3**; Ilan 1991–1992:150–154). Cave 2 was probably used only by the 'Eros' family, while Cave 3 was shared by both families; ossuaries bearing the name 'Eros' (EPΩC) were found in Chamber D of Cave 3. Thus both tombs apparently originally belonged to one of the families – either the 'Eros' family or the 'Ariston' family, until one sold or leased part of Cave 3 to the other (see Chap. **3**). Alternatively, in view of their common origin in the Syrian Diaspora, the two families may have intermarried and thus shared Caves 2 and 3.

The fact that an artist not of Jerusalemite origin – Azaria of Beirut – made or decorated one of the ossuaries (in Cave 2) is another indication of the foreign connections of both families; the unique glazed amphoriskos of Parthian origin (Cave 1, Chamber D) may provide some support for this 'northern' link.

Ariston of Apamea (אריסטון אפמי), whose name is inscribed on Ossuary 31 (Cave 3, Chamber D), may perhaps be identified with an individual mentioned in the Mishna, bearing gifts to the Jerusalem Temple from abroad (Chap. **3**, No. 19). If this identification is valid, it would be one of few examples of individuals known both from ancient sources and from the archaeological record of Jerusalem.[7]

## Phase B: Secondary Use in the Late Roman Period

There is clear evidence that the Akeldama caves were used for cremation burials in the Late Roman period: the cremated bones in Cave 1 were concentrated only in certain areas of Chambers A–C or deposited in Second Temple period ossuaries (in Chamber C). The pottery vessels found in association with the cremated bones included second–third centuries CE rounded lamps, and 'Beit Naṭṭif' lamps dated to the third–fifth centuries CE. Numerous candlestick-type glass bottles from the late first–mid-third centuries CE were found as well, mainly in Chambers A and B (Table **5**.1). Chamber A also yielded second–fourth century coins (Chap. **6**, Nos. 1–6,8–9) and other finds, including golden earrings (Fig. **7**.1) and iron finger-rings of the Late Roman period, and other jewelry common in the Late Roman–Byzantine periods, which can be attributed to either this or the Byzantine burial stage.

Late Roman artifacts were found in Chambers B and C of Cave 2; these include rounded oil lamps of the late first–third centuries CE, 'Beit Naṭṭif' lamps, and large basins of the third–fifth centuries CE (mainly in Chamber B), a glass bracelet and a bronze bell dated to the Late Roman–Byzantine periods, and a 271/272 CE coin in Chamber C (Chap. **6**, No. 2). Traces of cremated bones were found in some ossuaries in Chamber B.

The evidence for secondary, Late Roman use in Cave 3 is meager, and includes fragmentary candlestick-type glass bottles found in Chambers A and B – fragments of two or three of these in an ossuary which contained cremated bones (No. 24 in Chamber B).

After 70 CE, when Jewish burial in the three caves probably ceased, cremation was introduced, perhaps already by the late first or early second century CE. As cremation was prohibited by Jewish law, and has not been recorded in any Jewish context of this period, it is evident that the tombs were reused by pagans.

In the Jewish necropolis of the Second Temple period in Jerusalem several burial caves are known to have served secondarily, including some of the more elaborate tombs, e.g. those of 'Dominus Flevit' (Bagatti and Milik 1958:9–17), and on the west slope of the Mt. of Olives, above Gethsemane (Lagrange 1892:447–452; Clermont-Ganneau 1899:325). The 'Tombs of the Kings' in north Jerusalem also yielded Late Roman finds (De Saulcy 1865:366). This elaborate burial cave, which had not been sealed off following the Second Temple period, probably continued to serve the inhabitants of Aelia Capitolina for burial in the second–fourth centuries CE. The Second Temple period 'Eshkolot' tomb has crosses incised on its walls (Vincent 1899; Macalister 1900b) as well as Byzantine remains (Kloner 1980:181). Further examples come from Ramat Raḥel (Kochavi 1964:74–82; Barag 1970:38–40, 209–219; Kloner 1980:81), Romema (Rahmani 1967a), Bethany (Avigad 1967:140; Barag 1970:33–34), Bethphage (Saller 1961:220–232), and the 'French Hill' (Kloner 1980:142).

There are isolated examples in Jerusalem of Second Temple period tombs, which were reused specifically for cremation: at the 'Tombs of the Kings' Late Roman vessels in several of the inner chambers contained burnt bones (De Saulcy 1865:345–374); cremation burials in Late Roman cooking pots were recovered in the excavations at Ketef Hinnom (Barkay 1986:19); and fragmentary evidence of charred bones has emerged in other Second Temple period tombs in the Jerusalem necropolis (cf. at Ramat Raḥel, Stekelis 1934; Kochavi 1964).

An exceptionally short interval elapsed in the Akeldama tombs between the Jewish burials of the Second Temple period and the Late Roman, pagan, cremations. Who were the cremated individuals? They may have either been soldiers of the Tenth Roman Legion stationed in the city following its capture by Titus, or perhaps part of the civilian, pagan population. The meager anthropological remains, coupled with the difficulty of analyzing cremated remains (Chap. **8**), are not of much help in determining the age and sex of the Late Roman deceased. However, at least one juvenile and one child were identified among the cremations (Table **8**.2), perhaps indicating a civilian population rather than a military one.

Surprisingly, the earlier burials were not cleared out in this stage. Other than the unexpected phenomenon of using ossuaries as receptacles for charred bones, no significant changes were evidenced in the tombs; most of the ossuaries not used for this purpose were left untouched.

Thus, Caves 1 and 2 were probably continuously used until the fourth century CE, mainly for cremation burials. It is not clear when this burial phase terminated. According to the coins from Chamber A in Cave 1 it may have continued until the mid-fourth century CE, but the chronological separation between the Late Roman and the subsequent Byzantine phase (see below) cannot be precisely determined stratigraphically .

Judging from the development of burial practices, and the disappearance of cremation around the mid-fourth century CE in various areas of the Roman Empire (Morris 1992:42–69), it seems plausible that the termination of the cremation burials at the Akeldama caves should be dated to this period.

### Phase C: Additional Secondary Use in the Byzantine Period

Evidence of mass burials in wooden coffins, dating to the fifth–seventh centuries CE, was uncovered mainly in Chamber A of Cave 2, which contained a dense concentration of skeletons, each in its own wooden coffin. This chamber could not be excavated and no anthropological remains were collected. The finds included only a mid-fifth–sixth centuries CE funnel-mouth glass bottle (Table **5**.1, No. 35) and a Byzantine lamp (Fig. **4**.14:2), both from the surface of the accumulation in the chamber. Evidence for similar inhumations was also found in Chamber A of Cave 1: a Byzantine krater and store jar found *in situ* near a wooden coffin, in addition to two glass funnel-mouth bottles (Table **5**.1, Nos. 4,6), numerous Byzantine ''Ain Yabrud' lamps (Fig. **4**.13:2–4,7–8, and see Appendix), and jewelry of the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, which could belong to either this or the Late Roman burial stage.

Byzantine lamps were also found in Chambers B and C of Cave 2, and a glass bracelet and bronze bell of the Late Roman–Byzantine periods were found in Chamber C (see Appendix); thus, the entire cave seems to have been used in the Byzantine period.

As some of the lamps were decorated with crosses, these chambers were probably used by Christians living in the lower Kidron Valley (see below). The cessation of Christian burials in Akeldama may be assigned to the time following the Persian invasion of Jerusalem in 614 CE: the ceramic evidence seems to indicate that the burials in the wooden coffins did not continue beyond the first quarter of the seventh century CE.

It is noteworthy that even as late as the Byzantine phase, the remains of the Second Temple period were not cleared. An effort seems to have been made to place the wooden coffins in Chamber A of Cave 2 between the ossuaries, so as to avoid damaging them. The mention of this area in the New Testament (see above) conferred it special religious significance for Christians in the Byzantine and Medieval periods (see also Schick 1892a).

The burial caves surveyed in the lower Kidron Valley at the beginning of the century (Macalister 1900a; 1901) provide evidence of secondary use of earlier tombs in the Byzantine period, both for burial and as shelters for hermits and monks (Ussishkin 1993:346–358). Other examples of Byzantine reuse of ancient burial sites for burial were uncovered in the northern First Temple period necropolis of Jerusalem (Barkay and Kloner 1986). Several Second Temple period burial caves were also expanded and fitted for habitation, adding Christian inscriptions and decorations. Thus, the upper burial chamber (A) in Cave 2 may have served as a common grave for monks who inhabited the Kidron Valley caves.

Byzantine communal burials were uncovered in Cave 10 of the Mamilla compound in Jerusalem (Reich, Shukrun and Billig 1992) and multiple family burials in troughs were uncovered both in the northern cemetery of Jerusalem and at Luzit in the Judean Shephelah (Kloner and Sivan 1976; Avni and Dahari 1991).

Examples of communal monastic burial caves and tombs were found in some of the Judean Desert monasteries (Hirschfeld 1992). At the Euthymius monastery for instance, a burial crypt was used for the multiple burial of about 100 deceased (Hirschfeld 1992:136), and similar burial caves were recorded in the monastery of Choziba (Hirschfeld 1992:137).

## NOTES

1. An estimated one third of the tombs which existed in this area in the Second Temple period are known today. The rest have been plundered, destroyed or covered in later periods, mostly in recent centuries (Kloner 1980:66).

2. The excavations (IAA permit No. 1669) were directed on behalf of the IAA by Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut, assisted by Boaz Zisu, Uzi Dahari, Daniel Weiss, Rivka Birger-Calderon, Rafa Abu-Ria, and volunteers, chiefly students from the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University. Surveying was conducted by Giora Solar and Beni Arubas, and drawings of plans and inscriptions were prepared by Silvia Krapiwko and Ronald Greenberg. Field photography was by Doron Adar, except for Figs. **1**.29b-c and **1**.35, which were photographed by Abraham Graicer. Studio photography is by IAA photographers Clara Amit and Tzila Sagiv. Anthropological remains were collected and recorded by Joseph Zias. The wood of the coffins was examined by Ella Werker of the Hebrew University. Teams of the IAA Unit for Prevention of Antiquities Looting took part in guarding the site during the excavation. Additional help was provided by the controller's office of Yoram Gadish and the contractor Hussein Pharas. For preliminary reports see Avni and Greenhut 1992; Avni, Greenhut and Ilan 1994; Ilan 1991–1992.

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3. For a detailed list of finds according to chambers see Appendix. For the contents of ossuaries see Tables **2**.1, **8**.2.

4. For other alphabetical inscriptions which may have had magic meaning, see Hachlili and Killebrew 1983, Hachlili 1984, Kloner 1986. Another abecedary was recently discovered on an ossuary found in a Second Temple period Jewish burial cave in west Jerusalem (Misgav, in press).

5. Technical difficulties prevented the removal of the sarcophagus from the loculus and thus we have no data on its other sides. The lid was placed back on the sarcophagus by the excavators.

6. A simple stone door with metal hinges *in situ* was discovered in the Jewish Quarter excavations in Jerusalem; Avigad (1972:197) suggested that it belonged to a tomb of the Hasmonean period, though there is no clear-cut evidence that it belonged to a burial cave (Kloner 1980:146–147). A stone door pivoting on a hinge, with its locking device preserved, was found in a cave near the village of Ẓur Baḥer, south of Jerusalem (for a brief report see Chaplin 1876). The door is now in the Louvre (Dussaud 1912:58–59; see Dussaud 1925 for a description of the locking device). A stone door was found *in situ* in a second century CE decorated tomb excavated near Ben Shemen (Reich 1982) and a decorated stone door was found in a burial cave near Bethlehem (Macalister 1902b).

7. To date, only three such individuals were identified in ossuary inscriptions: Nicanor of Alexandria, who donated the gates of the Temple and whose name was inscribed on an ossuary found in a burial cave on Mt. Scopus (Clermont-Ganneau 1903; Avigad 1967:119–123); Theophilus the High Priest, whose granddaughter's ossuary was discovered (Barag and Flusser 1986), and Caiaphas the High Priest, whose ossuary is probably the ossuary which had been found in a small burial cave south of Jerusalem (Greenhut 1992; Reich 1992). For other individuals who were identified in the archaeological record of Jerusalem, see Chap. **3** and Ilan 1991–1992:153.

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