

A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible

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CHAPTER

3 Writing and the Tomb

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Abstract

Hebrew funerary inscriptions began to appear in Judah during late Iron IIB. These inscriptions are relatively unique in that they are written on, or inside, tombs. But they also include amulets that adorned the body during burial. The funerary inscriptions emerged at a stage when the bench tomb had fully developed, and their writings reveal multiple concerns regarding the dead. The Hebrew inscriptions stress the imperative of safeguarding the dead inside the tomb on multiple levels. The interred are identified by name, and their place inside the tomb is described. All of these concerns relate to the existence of the dead and the preservation of their memory. These concerns are also consistent with blessings and curses that are often inscribed on the tomb, which indicate that Yahweh's power could extend over the dead as well as the living.

Keywords: death, burial, afterlife (biblical), Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, kingdom of Judah, archaeology of Israel, mortuary practices, funerary inscriptions (Hebrew)

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HEBREW FUNERARY INSCRIPTIONS provide important voices that speak directly from the tomb. These writings offer invaluable information for tracing the history of death in Judah. The inscriptions began to appear in Judahite tombs by the late Iron II period, and they include inscribed artifacts, such as silver amulets,¹ but also writings on the tombs themselves. This is an important detail, because tomb epitaphs are rare among Northwest Semitic inscriptions. Phoenician mortuary writing generally consisted of inscriptions on objects such as sarcophagi that were placed inside tombs.² The names of the dead could be also inscribed upon stelae,³ but the Aramaic and Phoenician examples were not necessarily associated with cemeteries.⁴ In fact there are only a few possible cases of tomb inscriptions in these languages that date to the Iron Age.⁵ The appearance of Hebrew epigraphs on tombs is thus relatively unique in Northwest Semitic writings. Their number is limited, but the features of these inscriptions suggest that this type of writing was not anomalous. Although the inscriptions are often formulaic, they can also vary in style. Together these features suggest that funerary writing was an established practice by the late eighth century. This chapter will examine four prominent examples in order to understand why writing became an important part of mortuary culture during this phase of Judah's history.⁶

The general dating of this corpus of Hebrew inscriptions ranges from the late eighth century (the Silwan inscriptions) into the seventh and early sixth centuries (the probable date for the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb). In their form and content, these inscriptions reveal a stock vocabulary and a basic set of features. The features begin with the name of the dead, which is expected. They also include descriptions of space, either through deictic reference (“This is the sepulcher of . . .”) or general description. For example, an inscription (fig. 13) that was discovered in the nineteenth century on a cave several kilometers west of Jerusalem (and now lost) read: “the chamber” (רֶחֶם).⁷ Although not recognized at the time of its discovery, the cave was most certainly a Judahite tomb dating to the seventh century. The single surviving word is one that occurs elsewhere at Silwan and Khirbet el-Qôm, where it references the tomb’s interior. ♪

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Fig. 13



Drawing of the Sarîs inscription (Hanaeur 1889: 185).

Other features that typify funerary inscriptions include Yahweh’s invocation, curses, and warnings. These features typify Hebrew funerary writings even though they do not always occur together. For example, the injunctions found in the Silwan necropolis do not mention the God of Israel. But the call for Yahweh’s protection of the dead seen in other inscriptions serves a purpose similar to the Silwan tomb warnings.⁸ The blessings and curses were meant to protect the tomb’s occupants.⁹ Taken together, the features found in this important corpus articulate aspects of death that are otherwise inferred in the interpretation of mortuary remains.

The Funerary Inscriptions of the Silwan Necropolis

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Four inscriptions have come from the Silwan necropolis east of Jerusalem, two of which currently reside in the British Museum.¹⁰ The significance of these inscriptions is apparent in their original setting within the cemetery. ♪ Among the monumental tombs of the Silwan necropolis, at least four were monolithic, stand-alone structures.¹¹ These burial monuments stood out even among the elite tombs of what was probably the most exclusive cemetery of Jerusalem (except, of course, the royal tombs). Of these four monumental sepulchers, three bore inscriptions.

Collectively, the inscriptions display three of the four characteristics of Hebrew funerary inscriptions. The one feature they lack is any reference to Yahweh. The Royal Steward Inscription famously includes a warning against grave robbers, but the common theme in all of the inscriptions is an expressed sense of spatiality. The theme is closely interrelated with the first element of tomb inscriptions, the identification of the dead. But this form of identification was public and monumental, and can be considered ostentatious. In

each case, the inscription is written on the exterior of the tomb, above or near its entrance. Although the monumentality of the Silwan necropolis is rare in ancient Judah, it offers important insight into death, identity, and memory. Rather than caves carved underground, here we see the use of above-ground architecture to visibly mark the space of the dead. At Silwan the identity of the dead was publicly displayed in a manner unlike anywhere else in Judah. This aspect of monumentality plays an important part in the prophetic rebuke of tomb building found in Isa 22, which is often compared with the Royal Steward Inscription. Thus, it is necessary to review the ways in which space is defined, and specifically associated with the dead, in the inscriptions of Silwan.

I will begin this review of the Silwan inscriptions with the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter (Tomb 3; see fig. 14), despite the fact that its epitaph is the most fragmentary of this group, limited in its extant form to only two letters, one of which is reconstructed.¹² The significance of this inscription is not confined to what it may have said, its importance involves also the monumental setting of the writing itself. The Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter is today the most visible of Silwan's monolithic sepulchers. Studies of this tomb have suggested that it was once adorned with an Egyptian-style pyramid roof.¹³ The pyramidal roof was carved, along with the rest of the structure, as one piece from bedrock. Unfortunately, quarrying in late antiquity reduced the tomb to its present form. But the reconstruction of the sepulcher provides important insight into the monumentality of the Silwan necropolis and demonstrates how writing featured prominently in this aspect of the tomb. The purpose of the tomb was to be public and visible. For this reason, the inscription was located on the tomb's façade, above its entrance. The lintel included a carved space for writing, highlighting the words, which were written in large script.

Fig. 14



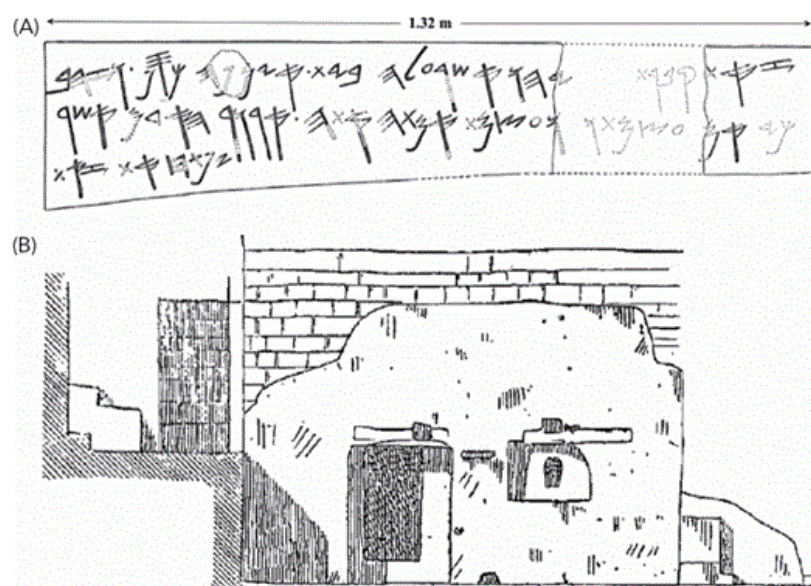
Reconstruction of the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter. The door, lintel, and roof are redrawn (adapted by the author based on Clermont-Ganneau 1884: 111).

Taken together, the grand scale of this structure and the prominence of its epigraphy show how the identity and memory of the dead were intricately linked through the tomb's space. The Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter continues to occupy a conspicuous place in Jerusalem's landscape, protruding, as it does, out of the Kidron Valley along the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The name of this tomb's occupant, originally interred inside, was lost when the lintel of the entrance was destroyed. Despite this fact, an element of immortality remains in what is left of the tomb, carved out of bedrock on a colossal scale.

The most famous of the Silwan corpus, the Royal Steward Inscription (*Silw* 1), is actually one of two inscriptions found on Tomb 35 (see fig. 15).¹⁴ Its literary form is also found in another fragmentary inscription from the necropolis (*Silw* 4 on Tomb 34).¹⁵ Taken together, these inscriptions provide a context for studying *Silw* 1. The Royal Steward Inscription was originally inscribed on the lintel above the entrance of a stand-alone monolithic sepulcher.¹⁶ The second inscription was originally located on the wall to the right of the entrance.¹⁷ Although the inner dimensions of the tomb were augmented in late antiquity, Tomb 35 originally consisted of two rooms referred to by the excavators as the “outer chamber” and the “lateral chamber.”¹⁸ The tomb is entered through the outer chamber, which was a squared room with walls decorated with a cornice. A burial bench was presumably located at the far end, opposite the entrance.

p. 104 Although the interior was enlarged and now constitutes a single space, the lateral chamber was located on the right side of the outer chamber, adjacent to the entrance. This chamber had a single trough-like bench similar to other tombs at Silwan (Tombs 1, 9, and 19), as well as Chamber 7 of Burial Cave 1 at Saint-Étienne.

Fig. 15



The Royal Steward Inscription and its original location in the Silwan necropolis.

A. The Royal Steward Inscription (Avigad 1953: pl. IX, B); permission granted by the Israel Exploration Society

B. Silwan Tomb 35, the Tomb of the Royal Steward (Clermont-Ganneau 1899: 308)

The two inscriptions were originally located on the front exterior of the tomb, inscribed at the same height, with the first on the left side and above the entrance.¹⁹

Silw 1

¹. This is the [sepulcher of PN-jiah, the royal steward. There is neither silver nor gold [he]re, ². [but] only [his bones] and his concubine's bon[es] w[ith] him. Cursed be the one who ³. opens this (sepulcher). 4

Silw 2

The chamber in the side of the vau[lt belongs to PN]

The first feature of *Silw* 1 is the identification of the dead. Although the text is damaged, and only part of the proper name is preserved (the theophoric element יהי-), the inscription includes the title of the deceased:

literally, “the one over the house” (אשר על הבית). In fact, the description of the dead is an important element in this inscription, and this element is manifested in different ways. The dead person is the implicit owner of the tomb, he is identified by title, and he is described in terms of his mortal remains (bones). The last two points of identification are also extended to the royal steward’s co-occupant in the tomb, his concubine.

The Identification of the Dead at Silwan

Both the Royal Steward Inscription and the inscription on Tomb 34 (*Silw* 4) begin with a construct chain that starts with the demonstrative particle, connecting the name of the dead to the funerary monument. This is important because the opening line compares with a Northwest Semitic dedication formula that is occasionally used in funerary inscriptions. The Silwan inscriptions (*Silw* 1 and 4) are not dedicatory—that is, nothing is being dedicated by anyone, for anyone. These inscriptions are declarations of ownership. The comparison of the Northwest Semitic dedication formula with the opening words of the Silwan tomb inscriptions lies in the fact that both formulae begin by referring to the inscribed artifact.

The opening words of *Silw* 1 and 4 identify the inscribed object in relation to the dead. This type of opening is similar to funerary dedications such as that of the Ahirom sarcophagus. In this Phoenician inscription from Byblos, the first word of the text is the name of the inscribed object, *ʿrn* ‘sarcophagus’ (KAI 1:1). The Hebrew inscriptions from Silwan differ in that the first word is a demonstrative particle followed by the object:

p. 106 “This is the sepulcher . . .” The לָ noun קברה, which is translated here “sepulcher,” is obviously the tomb upon which the inscription appears.²⁰ In the Hebrew Bible, this form of the Hebrew word for tomb seems to be reserved for specialized, individual burial places.²¹ An excellent example is Rachel’s tomb, or sepulcher, which is referred to as קברת רחל in Gen 35:20 and 1 Sam 10:2. The syntax of Rachel’s tomb parallels the reconstructed texts of *Silw* 1 and 4, where the construct state of the word is combined with a proper name, denoting ownership. The use of a specialized term for elaborate, individual burial structures is appropriate for the funerary monuments at Silwan. The individualizing nature of the tomb, as well as the inscribed declaration of ownership, also constitutes an important distinction from funerary dedications.

To return to the Ahirom sarcophagus (and others like it), its opening word is part of a relative clause that ties the living to the dead: “This is the sarcophagus that ʾIttobaʿal made . . . for Ahirom, his father” (*ʾrn z pʾl ʾtbʾl . . . lʾhrm*). The Silwan inscriptions on the other hand begin with a demonstrative, at once asserting both the presence of the tomb and its ownership. The name of the dead and the space of the dead are singularly focused. There is no second name recorded in the Hebrew inscriptions because they are not dedications. Instead, they commemorate the name of the dead by asserting their monumental place in Jerusalem’s eastern cemetery. This is an important, though often overlooked, element in *Silw* 1. The immortality claimed by the royal steward here is based on his own achievements rather than attained through a surviving lineage.

p. 107 The absence of another name rhetorically focuses the words of the inscription around the individual known as the royal steward. The irony is that his name is lost because of the lacuna.²² The inscription does mention a second person, the royal steward’s concubine (אמה), although unfortunately her name לָ is never stated. She is identified by her social role and, given the patriarchal society of Jerusalem during the Iron Age this identity is subordinate to that of the royal steward (“his concubine”). It is possible that her name was included in the second inscription (*Silw* 2), which describes the inner space of the tomb. The reconstructed portion of *Silw* 2, offered above, accounts for this possibility, although it is hypothetical. Tomb 35 did contain two chambers, and the excavator cautiously speculated that there might have been a bench wide enough for two bodies inside the outer chamber.²³ The question remains why she was mentioned at all in this inscription.²⁴ One possibility is that the marital relationship between the two individuals was exogamous. If so, the epigraphic source could convey a form of patrimony that differed from the traditional kinship-based society of Judah. Although this possibility is speculative, it finds support in two aspects of the

tomb. First, the dead are not identified according to any kinship affiliation, patronymic or otherwise. Instead, their identity is tied to their social status. Second, like the other tombs of the Silwan necropolis, Tomb 35 was not intended for communal burials. It was therefore not a typical Judahite family tomb and did not represent traditional Judahite patrimony.

The two occupants of this tomb, royal steward and concubine, are also identified through reference to their bones. This is a remarkable feature of the inscription. The reference comes in a warning against anyone who opens the tomb. It states that there are no precious artifacts inside, silver or gold, but only the bones of the royal steward and his concubine. A similar warning is found on another Phoenician sarcophagus inscription, that of Tabnit, a king of Sidon, which dates to the early Persian period (KAI 13).

¹. I, Tabnit, priest of Astarte, king of the Sidonians, son of ². Eshmunazor, priest of Astarte, king of the Sidonians, am lying in this coffin. ³. Whoever you are, any person that comes upon this coffin, you must not ⁴. open my cover and do not disturb me, because they did not gather with me silver, they did not gather with me ⁵. gold, and there are no riches. I alone am ⁶ lying in this coffin—You must not open ⁶. my cover, and do not disturb me, because such a thing is an abomination to Astarte! But surely if you

⁷. open my cover, and surely disturb me, you shall have no seed among the living under the sun, ⁸. nor resting place with the Rephaim.

The notion that there were no valuables inside these burial sites is somewhat disingenuous—the one is a royal official’s monolithic sepulcher and the other a king’s sarcophagus. A better sense of what this means can be gained by comparing the curses of the two inscriptions. While the curse in *Silw* 1 is vague, as is typical for epigraphic Hebrew funerary inscriptions, Tabnit’s threat is more explicit. It first states that opening the sarcophagus would constitute an affront to Tabnit’s deity, Astarte. The inscription then warns any potential tomb violator in very descriptive terms: they shall not have progeny, nor shall they have a proper burial with the royal ancestors. The curse is directed at the foundations of functional immortality. In other words, the stakes are greater than monetary gains.

The implications of Tabnit’s curse highlight the critical nature of the burial place, whether tomb or sarcophagus. The burial place’s function was to preserve the dead and maintain their memory. Furthermore, the words of *Silw* 1 make it clear that the most important elements in this monumental, richly decorated sepulcher were the bones of the dead. These observations together underscore a concern for the space of the dead already implicit in the declarations that begin *Silw* 4 and *Silw* 1, “This is the sepulcher (of someone important),” but also explicit in inscriptions such as *Silw* 2. The intention of the inscription is to describe the space of the burial complex in order to carefully mark the presence of the dead.²⁵

Shebna's Tomb and the Silwan Necropolis

p. 109 Scholars have often associated the royal steward whose inscription once adorned Silwan's Tomb 35 with a biblical figure named Shebna,²⁶ who held this office during the reign of Hezekiah. The basis for this identification is Isaiah's rebuke ל of Shebna due to his construction of an ostentatious tomb in Jerusalem (Isa 22:15–19). The interpretation is not without difficulties.²⁷ Yet it is a reasonable suggestion given the prominence of Shebna's tomb, the similar political titles, and the elite nature of the Silwan necropolis.²⁸ The space, monumentality, and location of the Silwan necropolis together serve as the most likely backdrop for Isa 22:15–19, regardless of whether or not Shebna is to be identified with the royal steward in *Silw* 1:1.²⁹ The issues in this prophetic rebuke are spatial, beginning with the tomb, but these issues also involve questions of placing the dead. Each problem can be recognized in Isa 22:16: "What do you have here, and who do you have here, that you have hewn for yourself here a tomb? The one who hews his tomb from on high, the one who inscribes in stone his dwelling!"

The problems raised by the prophet in this verse are twofold: the tomb and its location. The latter issue is stressed through the repetition of "here" (פה) three times.³⁰ The use of this common Hebrew term is evocative of *Silw* 1:2, where the inscription asserts that there is nothing of value "here" (פה) except for the bones of the dead. Regardless of how general the terminology is in these sources, it is important to note their common language because it stresses the critical nature of placing the dead. The Silwan necropolis, with its monolithic tombs, was important because it was the place where the bones of Jerusalem's nobility were stored. Shebna's tomb was controversial for the same reasons, as Isaiah saw it as an inappropriate place for this particular royal steward's remains.

p. 110 The second part of the problem is that of the tomb. Christopher Hays has identified two issues that Isaiah may have had with the tomb.³¹ First, it was not ל a family burial place but a monumental tomb built solely for Shebna. Second, the Egyptian influences apparent in the Silwan necropolis, notably the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter, may have played a role in Isaiah's rebuke.³² This second issue assumes that Shebna's tomb was in the Silwan necropolis, which is not known for certain but is probable. The first issue, however, is directly supported by the words of the rebuke. The rhetoric in Isa 22:16a stresses space, repeatedly questioning Shebna's choice of location (פה 'here'). But the second of the two interrogatives implies kinship, as in "Who do you have here?" or "Where is your family?" Within this rhetorical form, the ה indicating ownership, and combined with מי 'who', the phrase can be used in reference to family (Gen 19:12; 33:8).³³ The criticism is thus directed at Shebna's decision to build his own tomb rather than choosing interment in a family tomb. This is consistent with the tombs in Silwan, which were individual funerary monuments rather than communal burial sites.

p. 111 The questions in Isa 22:16a are followed by a description of the tomb. Twice it is stated that the tomb is "hewn" (בצדה), which may indicate something more than creating a cave-like structure. The description also states that the tomb was carved out of the heights, or "on high" (מרום), suggesting that the burial monument was visible and ostentatious.³⁴ Silwan's sepulchers are both freestanding and monolithic, carved out of the bedrock.³⁵ Thus the tombs of this necropolis fit the description in Isa 22:16, as Shebna's tomb would have held a prominent position directly across the Kidron Valley from the City of David. Unlike other cemeteries, such as those in the Hinnom Valley and the northern necropolis, which were probably obscured in Jerusalem's urban topography because they were largely underground and unobtrusive, the standing monuments of Silwan would have visibly marked ancient Jerusalem's eastern horizon. Moreover, in Jerusalem's other elite cemeteries, such as Saint-Étienne and Ketef Hinnom, the mode of burial was collective. Yet individual tombs were not only a hallmark feature of the Silwan necropolis, they were also ל displayed on a grand scale. Based on these factors, it is reasonable to place Shebna's tomb in Silwan, even if his tomb is not to be identified with Tomb 35 (the royal steward's tomb).

The cultural significance of placing the dead is evident in the poetry of Isa 22:16b, where “tomb” (קבר) and “dwelling” (משכן) are parallel. The parallelism extends to their construction as well. The tomb is hewn from the heights, referring to its prominent position, while the dwelling is “inscribed” in stone. The latter case uses a verb (חקק) that can convey writing as well as engraving, or chiseling. The clause continues to emphasize the importance of place, and the specific term that is used in parallel with tomb, “dwelling” (משכן), conveys a sense of permanent residence. But the clause does not build up the dwelling place; rather, it assigns it to him (Shebna) through inscription. Given these observations, it is possible that the allusion here is to publicly visible funerary inscriptions. Hays has further suggested that the rebuke is framed by allusions to Shebna’s funerary monument found in the terms סֶכֶן (Isa 22:15) and מַצֵּבָה (Isa 22:19), which he translates as “stele” and “monument,” respectively.³⁶ The ambiguity of both terms led Hays to argue that they indicate some form of stele, comparing the former to Ugaritic *skn* (see *KTU* 1.17 I, 26–34), and associating the latter with derived forms from נִצְבָּה that mean either “standing stone” or “pillar” (see 2 Sam 18:18). The architectural feature in question would represent the entirety of the tomb in Isaiah’s poetry. This type of feature could also carry an inscription naming the dead, as part of the tomb’s visible façade, thus claiming its monumental space for posterity. In their present state, none of the Silwan tombs include stelae.³⁷ But given that this necropolis was marked by monumentality, with richly decorated tombs, Hays’s stelae interpretation is reasonable.

The description of Rachel’s place of burial also provides a salient analogue for Shebna’s monument in Isa 22:15–19. In Gen 35:20, Jacob buries Rachel in her own tomb and erects a stele over it, thus it is called ‘the pillar of the sepulcher of Rachel’.³⁸ As noted, the wording in this verse compares with the opening lines of *Silw* 1 and *Silw* 4, where the feminine singular noun (קברה) is used in construct with the proper name to mark the owner and occupant of the sepulcher. But the “pillar” (מַצֵּבָה) also plays a role in the marking of the matriarch’s burial place. The cognate term in Phoenician (*mšbt*) is used for specialized stelae, or “pillars,” that memorialized the dead. One group of 𐤌 Phoenician memorializing pillars, from Umm al-Amad in Lebanon,³⁹ closely parallels the opening syntax of *Silw* 1 and 4. Though Hellenistic in date and thus later than the Silwan inscriptions, the Phoenician inscriptions from Umm al-Amad begin with a demonstrative particle (albeit attached to the object), which is in construct with the personal name.

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Umm al-Amad 10, line 1	<i>zmšbt b’šmr</i>	“This is the pillar of Ba’al Shamir”
<i>Silw</i> 4:1	[-- תרבק] תאז	“This is the sepulcher of Z--”

Certainly these inscriptions are historically and geographically removed from one another. But the point of the comparison, as well as the inclusion of Isa 22:15–19 in this discussion, is to gain a better sense of the epitaph as genre. The common practices of remembering the dead meant not only inscribing their names but also declaring their physical presence through the demarcation of their privileged space.

The Tomb Inscriptions of Khirbet el-Qôm

Multiple tomb inscriptions were discovered at the site of Khirbet el-Qôm, west of Hebron. These funerary writings in Hebrew were found in two tombs, both dated to the late eighth or seventh century BCE.⁴⁰ The first two inscriptions identify the dead person in one particular chamber (*Qom* 1–2 in Tomb I), while the third includes a blessing (*Qom* 3 in Tomb II).⁴¹ The first two inscriptions 𐤌 are shorter than the third, but they contain basic elements that are useful for understanding the function of funerary inscriptions at Khirbet el-Qôm.

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Qom 2

Belonging to Ophai son of Nethaniah.

Qom 1

- 1). Belonging to Ophai son of
- 2). Nethaniah.
- 3). This is [his] chamber.

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The inscriptions of Tomb I consist primarily of the occupant's name. Indeed, the epitaphs are almost identical and were closely associated with one another, engraved at the entrance of Chamber 3.⁴² Unlike the Silwan inscriptions, the Khirbet el-Qôm funerary inscriptions were located inside the tomb, and *Qom 1–2* marked the entrance to one of the chambers. Thus the inscriptions were not public declarations. Instead, their purpose was to establish individual space inside the collective surrounding of the bench tomb. Tomb I at Khirbet el-Qôm consisted of a central chamber that contained access to three side chambers. Chambers 1 and 2 were accessed along the north side of the central chamber to the right of the entrance, while Chamber 3 was at the far end of the central chamber opposite the main entrance. The individual chambers each bore three benches, carved out of the sides of the chamber opposite the entrance. Chambers 1 and 3 have carved headrests at opposite ends of each bench, and both contain a repository carved under one of the benches. Chamber 2 lacks these features, which may indicate that it was unfinished.⁴³ Only Chamber 3 has extant inscriptions. Within the collective environment of Tomb I—which included multiple chambers, burial benches, and repositories—it is clear that one of the chambers belonged to Ophai son of Nethaniah. This is not necessarily inconsistent with Tomb I's interpretation as a family tomb. It simply indicates that one of the chambers belonged to Ophai and his direct descendants, who were likely one wing of an extended family. Thus the function of writing here is to define more clearly the relationship of the dead to the interior space of the family tomb.⁴⁴

The most notable of the funerary inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qôm is that of Tomb II,⁴⁵ which includes an invocation of Yahweh alongside Asherah.⁴⁶ The inscription names the dead, Uriah, in its divine invocation.

Qom 3

- 1). Uriah the prosperous, his epitaph:
- 2). Blessed be Uriah by Yahweh
- 3). and from his enemies, by his Asherah, save him.
- 4). (Written) by Oniah.

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This inscription has several remarkable features,⁴⁷ most notable of which is an invocation of divine protection that includes an ambiguous reference to the goddess Asherah.⁴⁸ The inscription is also accompanied by a carved drawing of a hand with fingers spread and facing downward (see fig. 16). The fact that the inscription mentions two different personal names is still more unusual. Although common in Phoenician funerary dedications such as the Ahirom sarcophagus, the reference to two individuals by name in *Qom 3* is unique among Hebrew funerary inscriptions. Yet *Qom 3* is peculiar even in comparison with Phoenician inscriptions because the relationship between the two named individuals is left unexplained. Nothing in the inscribed text indicates any kinship ties between Uriah and Oniah. This ambiguity requires an explanation that takes into consideration the inscription's context and its literary features.

Fig. 16



Qom 3. Author's image.

The subject of the writing is made clear from the very first word, which is the name Uriah. This name occurs twice, beginning with line 1, where it is stated that this is his (Uriah's) inscription,⁴⁹ followed by the second line, where the name is the object of the benediction. Although the second name, Oniah, is less clear, I have interpreted it as the name of a kinsman or close associate who was responsible for Uriah's burial.⁵⁰ The two names, and the relative symmetry of their occurrences in this text, indicate the roles they played in the production of writing. Uriah's name occurs at the beginning and is followed by a clause that says the inscription is "his epitaph." Oniah's name comes in the final line of the text,⁵¹ where it is marked by a preposition that indicates his instrumental role in the writing of the epitaph.⁵²

The purpose of the two names, as I have argued elsewhere,⁵³ is to distinguish Oniah in relationship to the dead by specifying that his role in creating the epitaph for Uriah entitled Oniah to some degree of inheritance. The obligations that are assumed by Oniah, which may have included burying the dead, are comparable to the kinsman-redeemer who is the one who will attend to Job after his death (Job 19:25). This interpretation highlights the relational aspect of mortuary practices. The dead and their care played a critical role among the living. Moreover, the care for the dead in this instance involved the invocation of Yahweh. The divine blessing shows that Yahweh was not separated from the dead and that his protection extended to the tomb.⁵⁴

The precise nature of the divine invocation is not made clear. The two deities are called to bless and "save" Uriah from his enemies. The inscription does not include a curse, nor does it offer any description of the dead beyond the initial identification. Still, its apotropaic function can be compared with the imprecations in the Silwan funerary inscriptions. The purpose was the preservation of Uriah's identity, which begins with the recording of his name for posterity. The subsequent benediction extended to the protection of his physical remains inside the tomb. The inscription's iconography has also been associated with protection. The hand drawn below the inscription is generally understood to have an apotropaic function. The image's power to avert evil and the inscription's invocation of divine protection work together to guard the presence of the dead. The memory of the dead and the preservation of their physical remains are one and the same. Some have suggested that the hand represents Uriah's memorial.⁵⁵ In classical Hebrew, one word for "memorial" is "hand" (ט), as seen in 2 Sam 18:18 and Isa 56:5. In this case, the memorial for the dead man

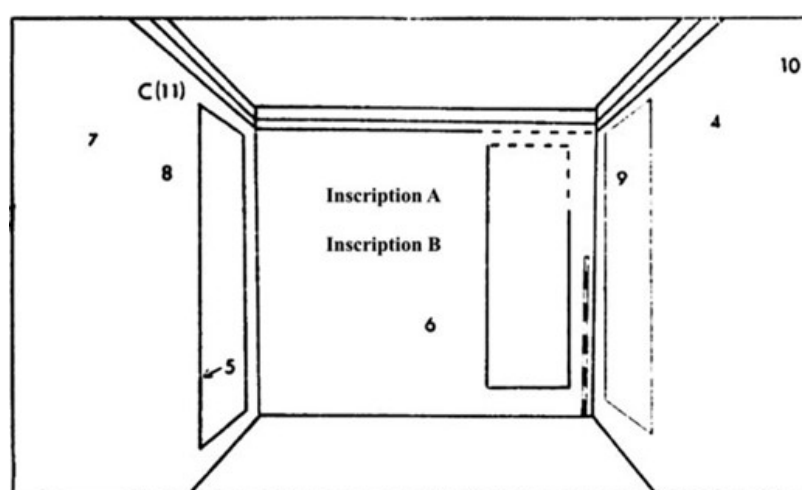
would take on a particular form of embodiment (a hand), staking his claim inside the tomb and maintaining his memory.

The Inscriptions of Khirbet Beit Lei Tomb 1

The epigraphic remains from the excavated tomb at Khirbet Beit Lei (fig. 17) are as unusual as the tomb and its remains. The writings inside the tomb do not refer to the dead, neither directly (e.g., personal names) nor indirectly (e.g., the mention of bones). Most scholars have therefore concluded that these writings were not funerary but prayers and curses written as graffiti by refugees hiding inside the tomb. The context of the writing suggests that they were funerary inscriptions, but their unusual elements require explanation. The analysis of these elements, the words and images inscribed on the walls of Khirbet Beit Lei Tomb 1, will offer rare insight into the ideological role that the place of burial played in Judah. 4

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Fig. 17



Interior of Tomb 1, Khirbet Beit Lei (Naveh 1963, 73, fig. 3). The numbers and letters mark the placement of inscriptions and iconography. Permission granted by the Israel Exploration Society.

The refugee hypothesis discussed in the previous chapter is found in most editions of the Khirbet Beit Lei inscriptions.⁵⁶ But, as previously discussed, this interpretation is ultimately unconvincing. There are no additional artifacts that would indicate that people once took refuge inside Khirbet Beit Lei Tomb 1. Furthermore there is no convincing explanation why anyone would want to inscribe a series of short curses and blessings inside a cave. Even less compelling is the idea that the imprecations were tied specifically to the tomb's iconography. This suggestion depends on how the images are interpreted, and it is much more plausible to read them as funerary. One study has suggested that the Khirbet Beit Lei iconography is the prototype for imagery that appears in tombs during the later Second Temple period.⁵⁷ In particular, the boat motif at Khirbet Beit Lei is similar to the engraved drawings at Jason's Tomb in Jerusalem, although Khirbet Beit Lei is much earlier. The boat motif may symbolize an idea of transition at death. Ultimately, the refugee interpretation founders because it has no real parallel.⁵⁸

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The setting of the Khirbet Beit Lei inscriptions inside Tomb 1 is a critical factor when considering their purpose. The meaning of the tomb should not be detached from the writings inscribed upon its walls.⁵⁹ Alice Mandell and Jeremy Smoak have recently shown that the texts spatially demarcate the tomb's interior in a way that frames the experience of all who enter.⁶⁰ The texts that are inscribed on the tomb's walls utilize imprecatory language that is not uncommon for funerary inscriptions.⁶¹ Of the seven inscriptions, four bear

the word ארר ‘cursed’ (see *BLEi* 1–4). Two of the inscriptions contain only this word (*BLEi* 2 and *BLEi* 4), while the other two are a bit more specific (*BLEi* 1 and *BLEi* 3). The former reads: “Cursed be [the] one who [ef]faces” (ר[אש]ר [י]מחוארר [אש]ר). The intention of this imprecation is to protect the writing inside the tomb, as well as the iconography. The second imprecation is less clear, although it could be read as a curse against anyone who curses the dead or challenges the claims made by the living in the name of the dead. The two-line inscription (*BLEi* 3) reads: “Cursed be he who reproaches you” (אררחרפכ). Another possibility is that it is protective of Yahweh and the invocation of his name, as the divine name is inscribed elsewhere inside Tomb 1. Regardless of their specificity, the function of the written curse is to map out the tomb’s space. The two main inscriptions are situated across from the entrance, and there they command the line of view as one enters the tomb. One (Inscription A) is written above the other (Inscription B), and both invoke Yahweh by name. The text and translation here follows the reconstruction of André Lemaire.⁶²

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BLEi 5 (Inscription A)

- 1). “Yahweh is the God of all the land. (The)
- 2). hills of Judah belong to the God of Jerusalem.”

BLEi 6 (Inscription B)

“Attend (to us) Yah, O gracious God! Acquit Yah, O Yahweh!”

What is unusual about these inscriptions is that they do not contain any references to the dead inside the tomb. Instead the two main inscriptions (A and B), though difficult to read, make evocative statements about the national deity (Yahweh). The relationship between the tomb and the inscriptions should be addressed in light of these statements. Scholars occasionally turn to biblical passages such as the Psalms to understand the divine motifs in the Khirbet Beit Lei inscriptions.⁶³ These parallels are often used to explain the refugee hypothesis, though they do not offer strong support. In fact, the most fitting biblical parallel ultimately supports a funerary reading, even though the biblical example is not funereal. In *BLEi* 6 (Inscription B), the combination of terms and divine epithets is analogous to Exod 34:6–7.⁶⁴ The strikingly similar terminology in *BLEi* 6 and Exod 34:6–7 touches upon transgenerational themes that compare with the symbolic importance of the dead inside a multigenerational burial site such as the Judahite bench tomb. The significance of the parallel between this biblical passage and *BLEi* 6 will be examined further in chapter 5, but here the shared terminology will be discussed in relation to Tomb 1.

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The deity is described in both *BLEi* 6 and Exod 34:6 as a “gracious God,” and the divine name is repeated, albeit in abbreviated form, in the 𐤋 inscription.⁶⁵ Both sources also have strong transgenerational implications, although nuanced differently. In *BLEi* 6, Yahweh is benignly invoked to remember and acquit, whereas in its biblical parallel (Exod 34:7), the Israelite deity does not acquit but instead remembers transgressions.⁶⁶ But the implication of *BLEi* 6, and its use of this specific set of verbs (פקד and נקד), is that Yahweh’s sovereign power extends across generations and is inclusive of the dead. Its binding force allows a people, here an unidentified kinship group, to align itself across generations through modes of identification that are tied to the tomb. Their deity is invoked inside the tomb, remembering the conditions that entitled the kinship group to the burial site, along with any accompanying privileges. This is the significance of *BLEi* 6. Inscribed on the walls of a tomb, the evocative words construct the space of the dead and serve as a reminder of the transgenerational promises implied by their presence.

The proclamation in Inscription A is presumably meant to be read before Inscription B, an epitaph that introduces the national deity and provides context for the tomb and its claims. Yet it might be more accurate to describe these claims as furtive, because of the tomb’s unfinished state. In fact, all of the unusual features of the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb should be understood as the result of this interrupted state. The burial site is a typical Judahite rock-cut tomb with two chambers that included hewn benches. But there is evidence that a

third chamber was planned on the northern side of the antechamber.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the benches held primary burials: the skeletal contents on the benches were undisturbed, with the remains of five people in the western chamber and three in the southern.⁶⁸ Oddly, there are no ceramic remains inside the tomb accompanying the dead. The absence of any trace of pottery, even sherds, suggests that the dead were not provisioned during their primary interment.

p. 122 The curious and exceptional aspects of the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb should be factored together in its interpretation. The tomb has burial benches typical of Iron II Judahite funerary architecture, but it lacks repositories. Although repositories were not always found in Iron II bench tombs, given the unfinished nature of the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb, it is possible that a repository was planned but ultimately never built. The unconstructed third chamber could have included these features, but stonecutters could just as easily have augmented the existing chambers with a repository. The fact that the burials were undisturbed indicates that secondary rituals were never performed in the tomb. There were no skulls placed on the floor at the feet of the benches, as seen at other cave tombs that lack repositories, and virtually no grave goods. The few exceptions were pieces of jewelry that were most likely worn by the dead. If this interpretation is correct, it would indicate that grave goods were not initially placed inside the tomb at the time of the primary burial. If no secondary burial was performed, it may also explain why there are no inscriptions referencing the dead. The inscription of names and the provision of goods may have been acts that were performed at a later stage, such as the liminal period prior to or during secondary burial.

The interpretation of the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb as an unfinished burial site is supported by the evidence of the tomb itself. The tomb's date cannot be determined with certitude, due to the paucity of artifacts, but its architectural features and the paleography of the inscription both suggest a date in the Iron IIIA. Based on this general dating, and given the tomb's unfinished state, I propose the following historical interpretation of the Beit Lei tomb. The tomb was part of a larger Judahite effort to resettle the lowland hills during the late seventh century, contemporary with the developments at Level II of Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) and following the national catastrophe that Judah experienced in this region in 701 BCE (witnessed in Lachish Level III). The effort to reclaim the Shephelah would have been aborted with the rise of Babylonian power. As a result, certain rituals were probably never performed inside the abandoned and unfinished tomb, such as inscribing the names of the dead, feeding the dead, and reburying their remains elsewhere inside the tomb.

The tomb's role in reconstituting a Judahite cultural presence in the lowland hills during the late Iron IIIA is supported by the theological claims made in *BLeI* 5 and *BLeI* 6. The covenantal language in *BLeI* 6 is paired with an image of Yahweh as the sovereign deity over the land in *BLeI* 5. As Lemaire has pointed out, there is parity in the literary structure of *BLeI* 5. I would expand upon this and parse the imagery as follows.

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5:1a	a "Yahweh" [divinity]	// b "all the land" [territory]
5:1b-2	b' "hills of Judah" [territory]	// a' "God of Jerusalem" [divinity]

Moreover, the text begins and ends with specific references to the deity: the divine name is the first word, and the last words are "God of Jerusalem." Yet the specificity in this final reference is territorial, identifying Yahweh as the sovereign deity of Judah's royal capital. The entirety of the region belongs to Yahweh, thus "all the land" is clarified as the Judahite hills and Jerusalem.⁶⁹ Together with the covenantal language of Inscription B (*BLeI* 6), the initial words encountered when one enters the tomb's antechamber are divine claims that associate the burial site with the surrounding countryside. Yet these claims are more direct, evoking Yahweh's transgenerational promises that encompass the living and the dead and ultimately relate

them to the land. These words are not prayers written by refugees but statements made on behalf of the dead by those returning to the Shephelah.

The Ketef Hinnom Silver Amulets

p. 124 The last two inscriptions to be dealt with here are the silver amulets discovered at Ketef Hinnom.⁷⁰ The paleography of the amulets suggests that they should be dated to the late seventh century, and this dating is commensurate with the remains found alongside the inscribed artifacts in the tomb.⁷¹ Yet these two texts are not funerary, at least in the strict sense. Unlike the other inscriptions that have been reviewed so far, these were not written on a tomb. Rather, they were engraved upon silver pieces that were then rolled tightly, presumably to be worn as amulets that served apotropaic purposes.⁷² At the same time, they were discovered inside the repository of Chamber 25, in Cave Tomb 24 at Ketef Hinnom. When the person who owned the respective amulet died, the amulet accompanied that person to the tomb. The protective function of the amulets thus extended to both the living and the dead.⁷³ This protective function is conveyed through blessings that compare with Num 6:23–27. The invocation of Yahweh for divine protection is also similar to Qom 3, and the study of these amulets will provide insight into relationship between the divine blessings and the individual in death.⁷⁴

KHinn 1

[For PN]–iah . . . ³⁾ the grea[t . . . who keeps] ⁴⁾ the covenant and ⁵⁾ [g]raciousness toward those who love [him] and ⁶⁾ those who keep [his commandments . . . ⁷⁾ . . . ⁸⁾ the eternal [. . .] ⁹⁾ [the²] blessing more than any ¹⁰⁾ [sna]re and more than evil. ¹¹⁾ For redemption is in him. ¹²⁾ For Yahweh ¹³⁾ is our restorer [and] ¹⁴⁾ rock. May Yahweh bles[s] ¹⁵⁾ you and ¹⁶⁾ [may he] guard you. ¹⁷⁾ [May] Yahweh make ¹⁸⁾ [his face] shine

KHinn 2

[For PN, (the son/daughter of) PN–ia]h. May h[e]/ ²⁾ sh[e] be blessed by Yahweh, ³⁾ the warrior and ⁴⁾ the one who expels ^{5)–6)} [e]vil: May Yahweh bless you, ⁷⁾ guard you. ⁸⁾ May Yahweh make ⁹⁾ his face shine ¹⁰⁾ upon you and ¹¹⁾ give you ¹²⁾ p[ea]ce.

p. 125 The reading of these amulets follows the recent treatment by Jeremy Smoak,⁷⁵ who highlights their parallel with Phoenician silver amulets.⁷⁶ The parallel includes their medium—the amulets are made of silver—as well as the terms used to invoke divine protection. In the parallels that Smoak discusses, an invocation using *brk*, *šmr*, and *nšr* is made on behalf of an individual identified by name. Although damaged and difficult to read, the two amulets from Ketef Hinnom both began with personal names. This is certainly the case with KHinn 2 and is highly likely with KHinn 1, where the remaining letters in line 1 (יה–) probably represent a theophoric suffix. The Phoenician parallels were also discovered inside tombs.⁷⁷ Regardless of what their roles may have been among the living, the context of these Hebrew amulets (along with their Phoenician analogues) requires that they be discussed in relation to the dead.

The function of the amulets can be compared with Qom 1, which invokes divine protection on behalf the dead. On one level, the comparison of Qom 1 with KHinn 1–2 indicates once more that during this period (Iron IIB–Iron IIIA) Yahweh’s power was thought to extend to the realm of the dead.⁷⁸ The deity’s blessings and protection continued for his adherents in death as in life. The idea of divine care here is most likely broad and generally applicable. But the inclusion of these words within a mortuary setting, particularly on amulets worn by the dead, indicates the importance of the decedent’s physical presence. The inclusion of the amulets among the mortal remains and grave goods in the repository of Cave Tomb 24 underscores the significance of the individual, even in collective burial practices. To preserve one’s name in writing was also

to preserve one's memory, regardless of whether this was on a tomb inscription or a personal amulet. Similar to those in the royal steward's tomb in Silwan, the bones of the dead here at Ketef Hinnom were important. Their presence inside the tomb was carefully guarded, along with the memories associated with them.⁷⁹

- p. 126 The physical presence of the dead is underscored by the parallel between the two silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom and Num 6:23–27 because their blessing formulation is related to the body.⁸⁰ In each example, Yahweh is asked to “bless” (ברך), “protect” or “keep” (רמש), and let his face shine upon the subject (see Num 6:25, יִלְאוּ וְיִנְפְּהוּ הָרִאשִׁימִן). The priestly blessing ends in the divine statement “And they shall place my name upon the sons of Israel, and I shall bless them” (Num 6:27). Smoak has shown that the use here of the verb מִשׁ with the preposition לַע (לֹאֲרִישִׁינְבִלְעִי מִשְׁתְּאוֹמֶשׁוּ) when found in other biblical texts indicates placement on the body (see Exod 29:6; Lev 8:8).⁸¹ The amulets thus embodied blessings that accompanied the individual in life and death. The divine invocation was inscribed upon the body of the dead inside Ketef Hinnom Cave Tomb 24, first as an amulet worn by the corpse (most likely) and then ultimately among the bones interred inside the repository.

Analysis of Hebrew Funerary Inscriptions

- The appearance of inscriptions at this stage of Judah's history is part of a wider trend in writing seen throughout the Iron Age kingdom,⁸² but it has a particular impact on mortuary culture. The inscriptions stress the imperative of safeguarding the dead inside the tomb on multiple levels. The interred are identified by name, and their place inside the tomb is described. Even in the anomalous case of the Silwan sepulchers, the individuality of the dead is guarded and expressed spatially, though in monumental proportions. All of these concerns relate to postmortem existence and the preservation of memory. These concerns also relate to the blessings and curses that are often inscribed on the tomb. Here, the tomb's injunction can be communicated through a single word, “cursed,” or articulated in a more expansive invocation for divine protection. The latter examples are important because they show that the dead were not disconnected from their deity. Death was relational, and the corpus of Hebrew inscriptions offers insight into the role of the tomb in this sense. The dead inside the Judahite tomb were dependent upon the living, but they could also count upon Yahweh for divine protection.
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Notes

1. In addition to the silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom, personal seals have been discovered interred with the dead inside tombs. See, e.g., the individual seals found at Beth-Shemesh (Tell er-Rumeileh), Ketef Hinnom, and Mount Zion, published in D. Mackenzie, *Excavations at Ain Shems (Beth-Shemesh)* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1913), 91–92; G. Barkay, “Excavations at Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem,” in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. H. Geva (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 101; and A. Kloner and D. Davis, “A Burial Cave of the Late First Temple Period on the Slope of Mount Zion,” in Geva, *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, 108–10, respectively.
2. E.g., the early Iron Age sarcophagus of Ahirom from Byblos (*KAI* 1) and the Persian period sarcophagi of Tabnit (*KAI* 13) and his son Eshmunazor (*KAI* 14) from Sidon.
3. Among the abundant examples in Phoenician, see *CIS* 1, 58, and F. M. Cross, “Appendix I: Phoenician Tomb Stelae from Akhziv,” in *The Akhziv Cemeteries: The Ben-Dor Excavations, 1941–1944*, ed. M. Dayagi-Mendels, IAA Reports (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2002), 169–73. Notable Aramaic examples include the stelae from Neirab and Katumuwa's stele from Zincirli (Sam'al). Both inscriptions are discussed in this book. For the wider historical significance of epitaphs in Northwest Semitic, see S. Sanders, “Naming the Dead: Funerary Writing and Historical Change in the Iron Age Levant,” *Maarav* 19 (2012): 11–36.
4. The Neirab stelae both mention possible graves (רִשׁ in *KAI* 225:7 and 226:8), but Katumuwa's stele was found inside a home, far from any cemetery. The Akhziv stelae were associated with a cemetery, but the more common form of

Phoenician stelae (or ‘pillar’ *mšbt*) only occasionally mention burial in their commemorative epigraphs. Even these mentions are rare and ambiguous: e.g., *KAI* 35:2 refers to “the place of my peaceful repose” (*l mškb. nḥty*) in the description of the pillar’s creation, which may refer to the place of interment. The fact that these inscriptions are often found outside of any funerary context does not help.

5. The only unambiguous example from the Iron Age is *KAI* 2, a warning that was engraved inside the entrance shaft to Ahirom’s tomb. *KAI* 30, a Phoenician inscription from Cyprus, may have originally adorned a tomb. More far-flung examples can be found among Punic inscriptions from North Africa. In Aramaic, the only possible Iron Age example is a stele found outside of Zincirli; see “Sam’alian Funerary Stele: Ördekburnu,” trans. A. Lemaire (*COS* 4.24:96–97). Rather than marking a tomb, however, it is more likely that this inscription commemorated the dead in an area separate from their burial. This observation is based on the other Aramaic inscriptions from Zincirli concerning the dead, such as the Katumuwa Stele.
6. I am currently preparing an edition of the Hebrew funerary inscriptions in collaboration with Jacqueline Vayntrub for the Society of Biblical Literature’s Writings from the Ancient World series.
7. J. E. Hanaeur visited the cave at Sarīs (today Shoresh) in 1889. He published his drawings in Hanaeur, “Curious Cave at Saris,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (1889): 184–85 and Hanaeur, “Cave of Saris,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (1890): 71–73. Hanaeur did not identify the writing as a tomb inscription. This interpretation was first offered by G. Barkay in a 1977 conference paper, unpublished but cited and discussed by Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 436–37.
8. J. Smoak, “May the Lord Bless You and Guard You from Evil: The Rhetorical Argument of Ketef Hinnom Amulet I and the Form of the Prayers for Deliverance in the Psalms,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 12 (2012): 202–36.
9. The recent monograph by B. Schmidt, *The Materiality of Power: Explorations in the Social History of Early Israelite Magic*, FAT 105 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 123–62 provides important insight into the apotropaic nature of inscriptions found inside tombs. Schmidt focuses on the problem of daemonic powers and their perceived threat inside the tomb, yet he does not address the problem of grave robbers and those who might disturb the dead. This issue is well known from treaty curses and is evident in several biblical passages, including Deut 28:26 and Jer 8:1–2.
10. C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, 2 vols., trans. A. Stewart (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1899), 1:309–16 first identified the inscriptions, with the exception of *Silw* 4. For editions of each, see D. Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan: The Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1993), 241–54; J. Renz, *Die althebräischen Inschriften*, Teil 1, *Text und Kommentar*, Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik I (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 264–65; W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 401–6; and S. Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 44–49.
11. Ussishkin, *Village*, 266–67 states that there may have been as many as five such tombs. The tombs that bore inscriptions are Tomb 3 (the Tomb of Pharaoh’s Daughter), Tomb 34, and Tomb 35 (the royal steward’s), following Ussishkin’s numbering.
12. Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, 315 first detected the *ר* and traces of an adjacent letter, either a *ד* or *ו*. His drawings were published in C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Mission en Palestine et en Phénicie: entreprise en 1881. Cinquième Rapport* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1884), 111 n. 73. Subsequent research into the monument has agreed with his observations, with little variance; see the slightly differing opinion of R. A. S. Macalister, “Reports from R.A. Stewart Macalister, M.A., F.S.A.,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Series* 34 (1902): 121. Ussishkin, *Village*, 241–42 generally follows Clermont-Ganneau, although he suggests other readings that are less plausible. For instance, he includes *ק* among the possible readings for the partial letter, though he is cautious and does not offer any reconstructions of the word. When I inspected the inscription closely on July 25, 2016, the head of the first letter looked identical to that of the adjacent *ר*, in which case the last word of the inscription was most likely “cursed,” part of the common vocabulary of Hebrew funerary texts. *Silw* 2:2 has the plene spelling *מרר* but the form *מר* is found in the Khirbet Beit Lei inscriptions.
13. Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, 313–16. This suggestion is supported by Ussishkin, *Village*, 50–54; see ills. 29, 34–35, which offer reconstructions but also illustrate the method of quarrying that destroyed the solid stone roof.
14. The second inscription (*Silw* 2) is shorter, and the surviving text does not offer any historical details that might parallel the first; see Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 403–5 and the editions in Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften*, 1, 264–65 and Ussishkin, *Village*, 247–54. On the interment ideology involved in the inscription’s curses, see Saul M. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 614–15.
15. Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, 309 was made aware of this inscription but was unable to see it because it had been hidden behind a modern doorway constructed by the current inhabitants. The inscription was rediscovered by A. Reifenberg, “A Newly Discovered Hebrew Inscription of the Pre-exilic Period,” *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 21 (1948): 134–37. Like the other inscriptions (except *Silw* 2), it was written above the tomb’s entrance. Literarily, it compares

- with *Silw* 1 in its opening formula (----[תאנז]), providing the missing word in the lacuna at the beginning of the Royal Steward Inscription. In addition, the second line seems to replicate part of the warning against “those who open [the tomb].” Unlike the the other inscriptions, however, this one was not written inside a recessed panel; see Ussishkin, *Village*, 243 and E. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament/American Schools of Oriental Research Monograph Series 7; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 123 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 209.
16. The description here follows that of Ussishkin, *Village*, 188–201. David Ussishkin and Gabriel Barkay excavated Tomb 35 as part of a wider survey of the Silwan necropolis.
 17. To the right of the entrance is a window-like opening that connects with the area of the lateral chamber, although this opening was not part of the tomb’s original plan. On the far right side of the façade was a trapezoidal footing that apparently served some manner of funerary ritual, possibly as a place for food offering; see Ussishkin, *Village*, 193, 293.
 18. Ussishkin, *Village*, 198–201.
 19. The nineteenth-century explorer Charles Clermont-Ganneau first noticed that the inscriptions were written in epigraphic Hebrew script (which he termed *Phoenician*) during a visit to Silwan; see Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, 305–13 and Ussishkin, *Village*, 188–89. Upon this discovery the inscriptions were removed and purchased by the British Museum, where they are currently located. The two epigraphic Hebrew texts were not accurately read until the 1950s, when they were studied by Nahman Avigad; see N. Avigad, “The Epitaph of a Royal Steward from Siloam Village,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 3 (1953): 137–52 and Avigad, “The Second Tomb-Inscription of the Royal Steward,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 5 (1955): 163–66. Avigad’s reading of *Silw* 2 was revised by D. Ussishkin, “On the Shorter Inscription from the ‘Tomb of the Royal Steward,’” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 196 (1969): 16–22. See also Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 403–406.
 20. The two inscriptions support one another. The feminine singular construct קברת with defective spelling in *Silw* 4 provides the parallel for the first line of *Silw* 1, where the word is missing. Likewise, the f. sg. demonstrative זאת can be confidently restored to the beginning of *Silw* 4 based on its presence in *Silw* 1.
 21. Both קברה and the more common קבר derive from the same root and are distinguished morphologically only with a feminine sufformative -ה, yet the biblical occurrence of the former indicates that it holds a distinct nuance; see M. J. Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings: Dynastic Ancestors in the Book of Kings and Ancient Israel*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 2/48 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 112. Thus, קברה is descriptive of Moses’s special burial (Deut 34:6). The term is also used in Kings and Chronicles, whenever a Judahite ruler is buried outside the tombs of the City of David: Amaziah (2 Kgs 9:28), Amon (2 Kgs 21:26), Josiah (2 Kgs 23:30), and Uzziah (2 Chr 27:23).
 22. In fact, there are no full proper names preserved in any of the Silwan inscriptions; only a few letters appear in *Silw* 1 and 4.
 23. Ussishkin, *Village*, 200–201. Other examples of double benches exist in the Silwan necropolis; Tomb 10 has a wide bench with two headrests, side by side (possibly also Tomb 16).
 24. The simple answer is because she was buried with her spouse, so her bones reside inside the tomb. But the question remains, since the inscription does not bother to record her name. There are other funerary examples of married couples, such as the statues of a seated couple found at Tell Halaf (Guzana) and dated to the ninth century BCE, which probably served ancestor veneration purposes; see D. Bonatz, *Das Syro-Hethitische Grabdenkmal* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2000), 16, Taf. VI B 9. Another example is *KAI* 35, a Phoenician inscription from Cyprus that memorializes a husband and wife.
 25. This aspect of spatiality is evident in other Hebrew funerary inscriptions, such as *Qom* 1, but *Silw* 2 uses specific terms to clarify the extensive area of the tomb, such as “shoulder” (כתף) and “vault” (חִירָצ), following Ussishkin, “On the Shorter Inscription from the ‘Tomb of the Royal Steward,’” 16–22 and Ussishkin, *Village*, 252–54.
 26. Avigad, “Epitaph,” 150–52. Avigad attributes this identification to Yigal Yadin, although the idea was first offered (conjecturally) by Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, 313. See also L. J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200–539 B.C.E.*, Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 253–54 and “The Royal Steward Inscription,” trans. P. K. McCarter (*COS* 2.54:180 n. 2).
 27. E.g., the inscription preserves no trace of a single letter of Shebna’s name as it is attested in the Hebrew Bible, שבנא; see E. Puech, “Palestinian Funerary Inscriptions,” *ABD* 5:127 and Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften*, 1, 263 n. 1.
 28. E.g., Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 253–54 n. 38 and Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 404, although all acknowledge that the evidence is circumstantial.
 29. The prophetic oracle specifically addresses שבנאשרעלהבית ‘Shebna the Royal Steward’ in Isa 22:15. On this figure, see J. T. Willis, “Historical Issues in Isaiah 22, 15–25,” *Biblica* 74 (1993): 60–67 and C. Hays, *A Covenant with Death: Death in the Iron Age II and Its Rhetorical Uses in Proto-Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 233–34.
 30. As Hays, *Covenant*, 235 notes, repetition of the term suggests that Isaiah is at the site of the tomb.
 31. C. Hays, “Re-excavating Shebna’s Tomb: A New Reading of Isa 22, 15–19 in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 122 (2010): 558–75; Hays, *Covenant*, 232–49.
 32. Hays, *Covenant*, 236–38, 237, fig. 5.2.

33. Hays, *Covenant*, 236–38.
34. Alternatively, this may indicate that Shebna's tomb is higher than other burials; see T. Ganzel, "Isaiah's Critique of Shebna's Trespass: A Reconsideration of Isaiah 22.15–25," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 39 (2015): 471 n. 9, citing commentaries. This is, however, a misreading of the term, and the reference to height does not imply that the tomb was near (or even on) the temple mount, as Ganzel (475–79) argues. The interpretation finds no archaeological support in Jerusalem. Finally, Isa 22:15–25, unlike Ezek 43:7–9, does not refer to purity concerns.
35. Ussishkin, *Village*, 283–89.
36. Hays, *Covenant*, 232–33, 237–43, esp. 232 n. 133. The terms are usually interpreted in relation to Shebna's political role, hence NRSV translates them as "steward" and "office," respectively.
37. Again, it should be stressed that much of the Silwan necropolis was quarried in antiquity.
38. Hays, *Covenant*, 241.
39. M. Dunand and R. Duru, *Oumm el-'Amed, une ville de l'époque Hellénistique aux échelles de Tyr*, République libanaise Ministère de l'éducation nationale Direction générale des antiquités Études et documents d'archéologie (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1962), 181–90.
40. The tombs were in fact looted, and some of the inscriptions first appeared on the antiquities market. They were eventually traced to Khirbet el-Qom, where the initial salvage excavation established their provenance; see W. Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material from Khirbet el-Kôm," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40–41 (1970–71), 139–204 and Dever, "Qôm, Khirbet El-," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. E. Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 1233–35. In his edition of the Qôm material, Ahituv, *Echoes*, 220–33, esp. 226–33, included several short inscriptions that appeared on the antiquities market and were purportedly from the site. These inscriptions were published by J. Naveh, "Hebrew Graffiti from the First Temple Period," *Israel Exploration Journal* 51 (2001): 198–206. Yet, as Ahituv notes, their provenance "has not been firmly established" (*Echoes*, 220). Because of these unresolved issues, my treatment here will not fully engage these additional inscriptions.
41. See the editions in Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 325–34.
42. The paleography, which suggests an early seventh-century date, differs only in their mode of writing: *Qom* 2 was written in ink above the chamber's lintel, while *Qom* 1 was chiseled on the left side of the chamber's entrance and the incised letters were colored with black ink. See Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material," 153. Two of the unprovenanced inscriptions, said to be from Khirbet el-Qôm, read "cursed be Ophai, son of Nethaniah"; see Ahituv, *Echoes*, 227–28, nos. 5–6. The inscriptions offer enticing data in relation to *Qom* 1–2, but, if authentic, it is unclear where they would have been situated. Were they originally located near Tomb I? What was their relationship to Tomb I and its inscriptions? These questions are impossible to answer.
43. It is also possible that more chambers were planned for the southern side of the tomb, to the left of the central entrance. Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material," 157 noted that there was much graffiti on the southern wall and he included drawings of a few Hebrew letters. Among these letters is אב (see the next note). To speculate further, if the tomb was left unfinished, the letters (and the single term of kinship) may have indicated the planned organization of the tomb during expansion.
44. The word "father" (אב), inscribed in the main chamber of Tomb II, on a wall that did not have a side chamber, may suggest a similar use of writing to delineate space—here, for the purpose of planning an additional chamber for family relations in a joint household.
45. Although space prohibits a full bibliography, see M. J. Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010): 53–56. See also A. Lemaire, "Les inscriptions de Khirbet El-Qôm," *Revue Biblique* 84 (1977): 597–608; S. Mittmann, "Die Grabinschrift des Sängers Uriahu," *Zeitschrift für die Deutsche Palästina-Vereins* 97 (1981): 139–52; Z. Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription Mentioning a Goddess," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 255 (1984): 39–74; Zevit, *Religions*, 359–70; J. M. Hadley, "The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription," *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987): 50–62; B. Margalit, "Some Observations on the Inscription and Drawing from Khirbet el-Qôm," *Vetus Testamentum* 39 (1989): 371–78; and Schmidt, *Materiality*, 144–63.
46. In addition to Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 327–32, see also "Khirbet el-Qom," trans. K. McCarter (COS 2.52:179); S. Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*, Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study 23 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 412; and Schmidt, *Materiality*, 156–62. The drawings of Dever, Lemaire, and Mittman are reproduced by Zevit, "Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription," 40–44, figs. 1–5, along with his own; see also Zevit, *Religions*, 359, fig. 5.5 and the drawing produced by Hadley, "Khirbet el-Qom Inscription," 52.
47. One of the unusual features is the doubling of certain letters, which is discussed at length by Schmidt, *Materiality*, 158–62 and more briefly by Zevit, "Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription," 44. The possibility that the doubling of letters represents some numinous function is explored in depth by Schmidt, although the evidence for such practices remains elusive.
48. Some scholars question whether אִשְׁרָתָה is a reference to the goddess Asherah because that interpretation involves a possessive suffix attached to a personal name, which is not common practice. This form does have parallels in the Hebrew

inscriptions of Kuntillet Ajrud almost a century earlier (*KAjr* 14:2, 18:1, 19:7, and 20:1); see Zevit, “Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription,” 44–46; Zevit, *Religions*, 400–405; and M. S. Smith, *Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed., Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 118–25.

49. Zevit, “Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription,” 43–44. An alternative is to read כתבה as a verb (“[he] wrote it”) rather than a noun. Hadley, “Khirbet el-Qom Inscription,” 53 favors this reading but states that ’Uriah “could have had someone else inscribe that which he had dictated, and yet still state that he ‘wrote it’ (cf. [2 Kgs 10:1]).”
50. Suriano, “Death,” 53–56.
51. Below the image of the hand there is a second inscription, albeit one that is usually treated as part of *Qom* 3. The writing here is more difficult to read:

1).	[. . .]	[. . .]
2).	“and by his Asherah	ולאשרתה
3).	his Asherah.”	התר[ש]א

It is unclear whether this was meant to be a second part to *Qom* 3 or a separate invocation of the deity; see Hadley, “Khirbet el-Qom Inscription,” 60. The inscription was illicitly removed prior to the site’s excavation; as a result, the lower portion is heavily damaged.

52. The preposition here does not indicate the object, as in “for . . .” or “on behalf of . . .”
53. Suriano, “Death,” 53–56.
54. J. D. Smoak, *The Priestly Blessing in Inscription and Scripture: The Early History of Numbers 6:24–26* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
55. Hadley, “Khirbet el-Qom Inscription,” 60–61, citing 1 Sam 15:12; 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:6; and 1 Chr 18:3. In the article’s postscript, Hadley (61–62) suggests that the hand symbol is apotropaic, based on her work directly with the artifact at the Israel Museum, as well as a parallel with a scarab seal. The two explanations, however, are not mutually exclusive. The hand symbol could have served both as a mnemonic device that embodied the posterity of the dead and as a protective sign that guarded their memory; see also Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften*, 1, 206. More recently, Schmidt, *Materiality*, 151–52 looked carefully at the apotropaic interpretation, but he also raised the possibility that, as a memorial, the downward-pointing hand signifies the vulnerability of the dead, writing: “in contrast to the upward or ‘heavenward’-positioned human hand expressive of praise and petition, the earthward hand may have concomitantly signified the loss of the deceased (here, Uriah’s) ability to petition or praise YHWH from the other side of the grave” (Schmidt, *Materiality*, 152–53).
56. The most detailed treatment of this thesis is found in Zevit, *Religions*, 435–37.
57. A. Mandell and J. D. Smoak, “Reconsidering the Function of Tomb Inscriptions in Iron Age Judah: Khirbet Beit Lei as a Test Case,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 16 (2016): 245.
58. To be sure, Zevit, *Religions*, 351–71 draws parallels between a cave inscription near En-Gedi and the tomb inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qôm. The former is anomalous, whereas the latter is unambiguously funereal. The En-Gedi inscription (*EnGd* 2:1) was found in a cave that was not a tomb. The inscriptions numbered 4–7 in Ahituv, *Echoes*, 226–30 may constitute funerary examples of cursing an individual. But the authenticity of these sources is uncertain. Typically, curses in funerary inscriptions are general and not directed at anyone in particular. In the end, however, Zevit’s analysis is invaluable because the themes found in all of these inscriptions relate to common forms of cultural identification, despite their varying genres.
59. With the exception of Zevit’s interpretation of the tomb’s interior as ritual space, most studies have reduced the tomb to nothing more than a hiding place where prayers were written.
60. Mandell and Smoak, “Reconsidering,” 205–7. See the spatial analysis of the Khirbet Beit Lei cave inscriptions in Zevit, *Religions*, 405–37.
61. Mandell and Smoak, “Reconsidering,” 199–200.
62. A. Lemaire, “Prières en temps de crise: Les inscriptions de Khirbet Beit Lei,” *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976): 558–68; see also “The Khirbet Beit Lei Cave Inscriptions,” trans. P. K. McCarter (*COS* 2.53:180). The difficulties in the epigraphy have resulted in several suggested readings; see, e.g., Zevit, *Religions*, 405–35. My reading of Inscription B differs from the translation found in the editio princeps, J. Naveh, “Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 13 (1963): 74–92. The difficult nature of the Khirbet Beit Lei inscriptions can be seen in Naveh’s later publication “Hebrew Graffiti,” 197–98 in

which he revisited the inscriptions he first published and reviewed subsequent attempts to translate them. He rejected יהדה in the second line of Inscription B but acknowledged that his alternative (להיהד) was problematic. Although Naveh found Patrick Miller's (and Lemaire's) reading of פקד in Inscription B plausible, he could not accept it on epigraphic grounds. But Naveh's epigraphic grounds for rejecting this reading were unconvincing, and even he admitted that his alternative reading (המקירה) makes little sense. He attempted to explain this problem by suggesting that the line was intentionally cryptic due to the magical purposes of the writing, but this does not inspire much confidence in his reconstruction. The interpretation proposed by F. M. Cross, "The Cave Inscriptions from Khirbet Beit Lei," in *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, ed. J. A. Sanders (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 299–306 differs greatly from that of Naveh and Lemaire. It creates problems with the recognizable letters and is too speculative in supplying additional letters in the spaces.

63. See, e.g., Naveh, "Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave," 86.
64. P. Miller, "Psalms and Inscriptions," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 267 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 210–32.
65. McCarter notes that this divine epithet occurs also at Kuntillet Ajrud (*KAjr* 20:2); see "The Khirbet Beit Lei Cave Inscriptions," trans. P. K. McCarter (*COS* 2.53:180).
66. In the verses that follow the divine attribute in Exod 34, Moses supplicates himself before Yahweh, asking that he make Israel his inheritance (vv. 8–9). Yahweh agrees to a covenantal relationship (v. 10) and reiterates the promise of land given to the patriarchs (v. 11).
67. An outline of an opening to a third chamber is evident on this wall. Zevit, *Religions*, 407 notes that the inscription on the northern wall was disturbed by the carved outline, indicating that the inscriptions appeared in an early phase of the tomb's construction and use.
68. N. Haas, "Human Skeletal Remains in Two Burial Caves," *Israel Exploration Journal* 13 (1963): 93–96 and Zevit, *Religions*, 405.
69. The reference to the hills rather than the more specific term for Khirbet Beit Lei's setting (Shephelah) is poetic.
70. See G. Barkay et al., "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 334 (2004): 41–71; G. Barkay et al., "The Challenges of Ketef Hinnom: Using Advanced Technologies to Reclaim the Earliest Biblical Texts and Their Contexts," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 162–71; Schmidt, *Materiality*, 123–30; and B. B. Schmidt, "The Social Matrix of Early Judean Magic and Divination: From 'Top Down' or 'Bottom Up'?", in *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*, ed. B. J. Collins and P. Michalowski (Atlanta: Lockwood, 2013), 279–93. See also the work of Jeremy Smoak on these amulets: Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*; J. Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of Yhwh as Guardian and Protector in Psalm 12," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 (2010): 421–32; Smoak, "'Prayers of Petition' in the Psalms and West Semitic Inscribed Amulets: Efficacious Words in Metal and Prayers for Protection in Biblical Literature," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (2011): 75–92; and Smoak, "May Yahweh Bless You," 202–36.
71. The seventh-century date is secure, despite the attempts to place it later, in the Persian or Hellenistic periods. See Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften*, 1, 447–56 and the response by Barkay et al., "Amulets," 50–54. See also A. Berlejung, "Ein Programm fürs Leben: Theologisches Wort und anthropologischer Ort der Silberamulette von Ketef Hinnom," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 120 (2008): 208–12, followed by N. Na'aman, "A New Appraisal of the Silver Amulets from Ketef Hinnom," *Israel Exploration Journal* 61 (2011): 184–95 and the response by S. Ahituv, "A Rejoinder to Nadav Na'aman's 'A New Appraisal of the Silver Amulet from Ketef Hinnom,'" *Israel Exploration Journal* 62 (2012): 223–32.
72. The analysis of Berlejung, "Ein Programm," 214–29 attempts to refocus the study of the amulets in order to understand their implications for the living. This is constructive, yet it bears repeating that the importance of the amulets in life was transferred to death when the artifacts were interred with the dead.
73. Schmidt, *Materiality*, 142.
74. The translation here follows that of Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 18–42.
75. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 18–42. See also the treatments in Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 217–25 and Ahituv, *Echoes*, 49–55, as well as in "The Ketef Hinnom Amulets," trans. P. K. McCarter (*COS* 2.83). Na'aman, "New Appraisal," 189–90 reconstructs בית at the end of *KHinn* 2, line 7, reading lines 7–8 (ועדמלעותיב) as "his house is everlasting," although this reading is improbable according to Ahituv, "Rejoinder," 227–30 and Schmidt, *Materiality*, 132–35. Yet it is curious, considering that ביתעלום means "tomb" (Eccl 12:5; see also the DAPT, Combination B, line 6, as well as the Ahirom sarcophagus [*KA* 1:1], where it is abbreviated *b'Im*). A variation on this term is found also in Ps 49:12, discussed in chapter 7.
76. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 44–52.
77. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 52–58.
78. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 54–55, citing M. Leuenberger, "Blessing in Text and Picture in Israel and the Levant: A Comparative Case Study on the Representation of Blessing in Hīrbet El-Qom and the Stela of Yehawmilk of Byblos: Teil 2,"

Biblische Notizen 141 (2009): 74. Schmidt, *Materiality*, 142 makes a similar point.

79. The writings on the Ketef Hinnom silver amulets are comparable in their most basic elements with seals discovered inside Judahite tombs (including Ketef Hinnom Cave Tomb 24). In both sets of artifacts, individual names are inscribed on objects that could be worn on the body and that were interred with the individual at death. See, e.g., the individual seals found at Beth-Shemesh, Ketef Hinnom, and Mount Zion, published in Mackenzie, *Excavations at Ain Shems*, 91–92; Barkay, “Excavations at Ketef Hinnom,” 101; and Kloner and Davis, “Burial Cave,” 108–10, respectively.
80. As stressed by Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, and Schmidt, *Materiality*, the similarities reflect the common cultural background of both the inscription and the biblical passage. In other words, the parallel does not require that Num 6:23–27 date to late Iron IIIA or Iron IIIB, nor does it mean that the silver amulets are the earliest biblical verses. Along these lines, Schmidt’s work raises important questions regarding social location of this manner of apotropaic magic.
81. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 73–77. See also F. Stavrakopoulou, “Making Bodies: On Body Modification and Religious Materiality in the Hebrew Bible,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 2 (2013): 545–47.
82. See W. M. Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins through the Rabbinic Period*, Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 79–97. Regarding funerary inscriptions, see C. A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age*, Archaeology and Biblical Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 79–81.