

## A HERODIAN-PERIOD STAIRCASE ON MOUNT ZION, JERUSALEM, AND A REEVALUATION OF THE REMAINS FROM BISHOP GOBAT SCHOOL

AMIT RE'EM

### INTRODUCTION

During September–October 2010, a trial excavation was carried out at Bishop Gobat School on Mt. Zion, Jerusalem (map ref. 630959/221616; Figs. 1, 2).<sup>1</sup> The results of the excavation offer an opportunity to reevaluate the archaeological remains from the school and its environs, and to discuss related research issues.

Bishop Gobat School—Jerusalem University College, Institute of Holy Land Studies—is located in the southwestern part of Mt. Zion, at the end of Aravna Ha-Yevusi St. In 1843, Samuel Gobat (1799–1879), the second Protestant Bishop of Jerusalem, purchased a land plot for burial on behalf of the Protestant community. Ten years later, the land designation was changed, and Gobat built a school in the western half of the plot that served a missionary shelter for orphaned Arab youth; this structure was the first to be built outside the city walls of Jerusalem. As the cemetery area was reduced, no space for burial remained, and in 1906 the cemetery was expanded by the addition of a plot on its east (Schultz 2004:57–61; Plan 1). In 1933, the school's area was expanded, and classrooms were built to the west of the main building on the western slopes of Mt. Zion (henceforth, 'the western wing'; Fig. 3; Plans 1–3). Between 1948 and 1967, the building was in the possession of the Israeli Ministry of Religion and after 1967, it was restored to the American Institute.

<sup>1</sup> The excavation (Permit No. A-6007) was directed by the author, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, with the assistance of Yossi Ohayon (administration); Avi Hagian; Tanya Kornfeld, Yakov Shmidov and Mark Konin (surveying); Assaf Peretz (photography); Natalia Zak and Yakov Shmidov (drafting); Marina Shuisky (pottery plates); Donald T. Ariel (numismatics); Debora Sandhaus (ceramic analysis); David Amit (groundstones); Clara Amit (object photography); Lena Kupershmidt (metal conservation); and the support of the staff of the Jerusalem District of the IAA. The article was submitted in Hebrew and edited by Galit Samora-Cohen; it was translated to English by Ezra Marcus.

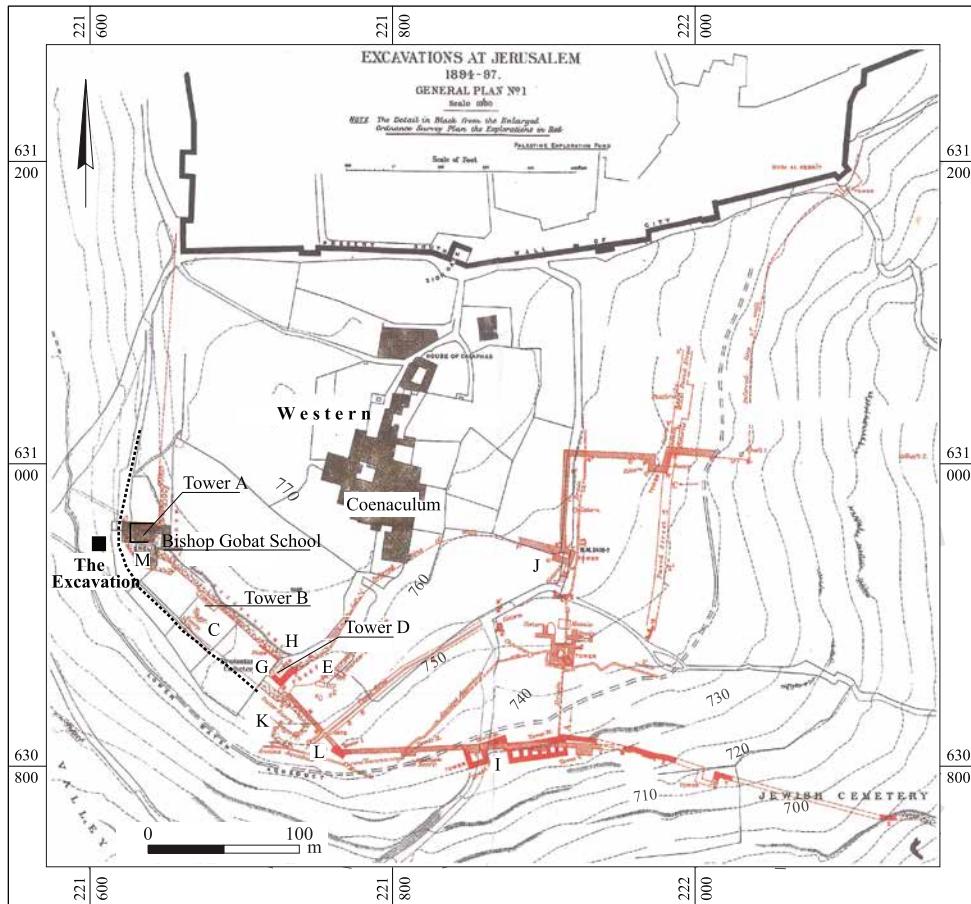


Fig. 1. Location map: 'The Rock Scarp of Zion' and the Bliss and Dickie excavations (after Bliss and Dickie 1898).

### *History of Research (Fig. 1; Plans 1–3)*

In the mid-nineteenth century CE, in anticipation of the establishment of the Protestant cemetery, several researchers, including Charles Wilson, Claude Reignier Conder, Ermete Pierotti and Charles Warren (Schultz 2004:61–71), carried out archaeological excavations at the site. These investigations exposed parts of the hewn rock escarpment that extended from north to south, turning southeast, near which was a hewn staircase. During the school's renovation in 1874, Henry Maudsley carried out archaeological excavations, which were published by Conder (1872; 1875a; 1875b). Maudsley exposed the bases of three towers, a hewn staircase, ritual baths (*miqva'ot*), water cisterns and other installations along the hewn escarpment, termed "the Rock Scarp of Zion" (Conder 1872). The escarpment continues to the north where it apparently connected to the southwestern corner of the Ottoman city wall.

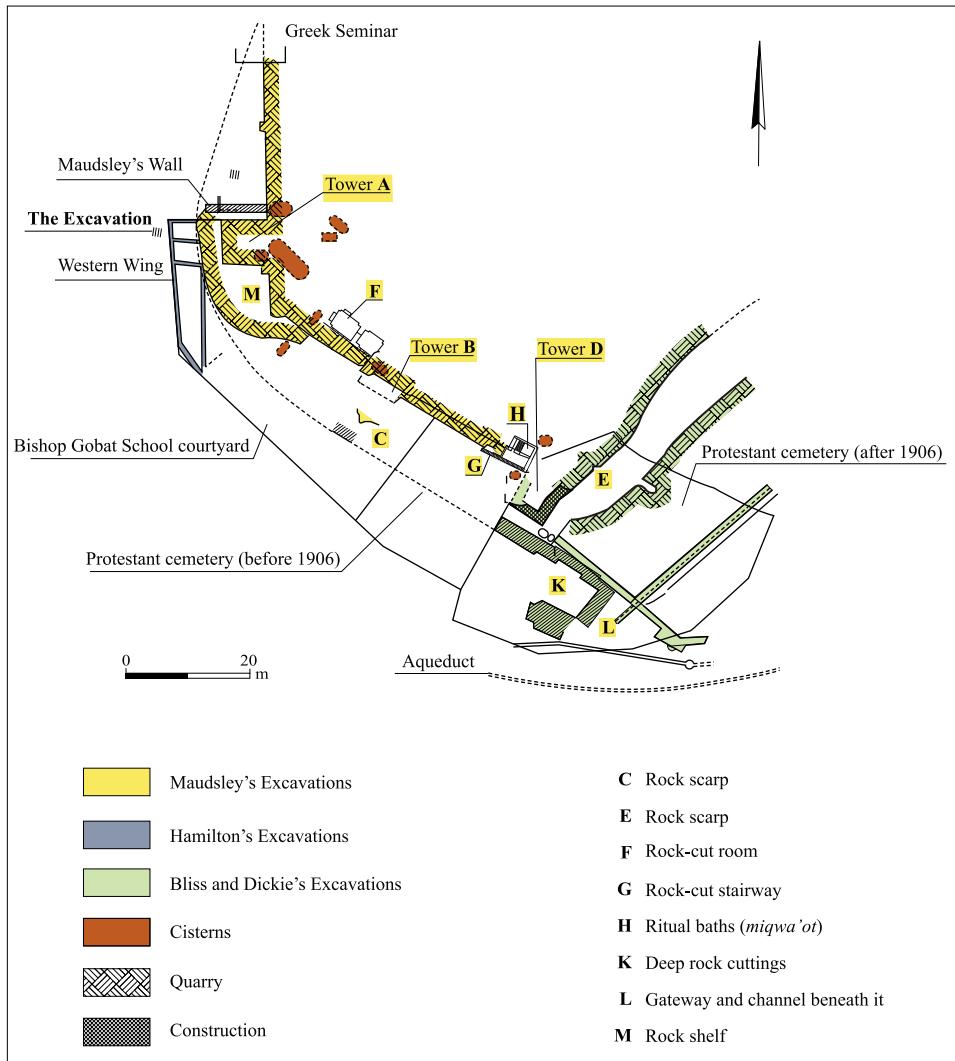
In the northern part of the escarpment, at the foot of a rock shelf (Fig. 1:M; Plans 1; 2: Section 1–1), was the rock-hewn base of Tower A (12 × 15 m, c. 6 m high) that protrudes from the cliff. From Tower A, the escarpment turns to the southeast, down the slope of



Fig. 2. A panoramic view of the western slopes of Mt. Zion with the Bishop Gobat School and the 'western wing' in the center, and the Moab mountains in the background; photograph from the 1930s.

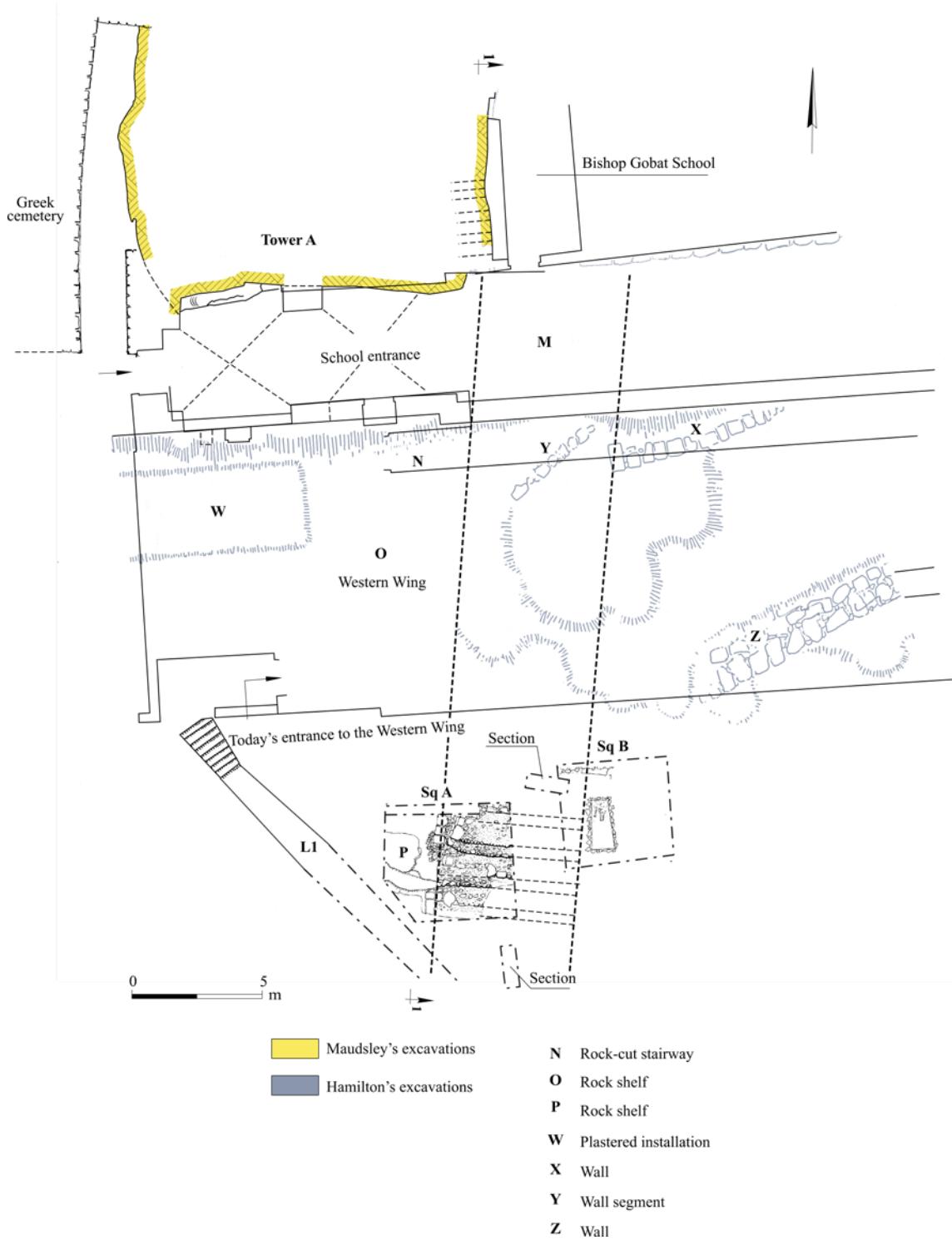


Fig. 3. The western slopes of Mt. Zion showing the Bishop Gobat School and the new 'western wing'; partially burned photograph from the 1930s.

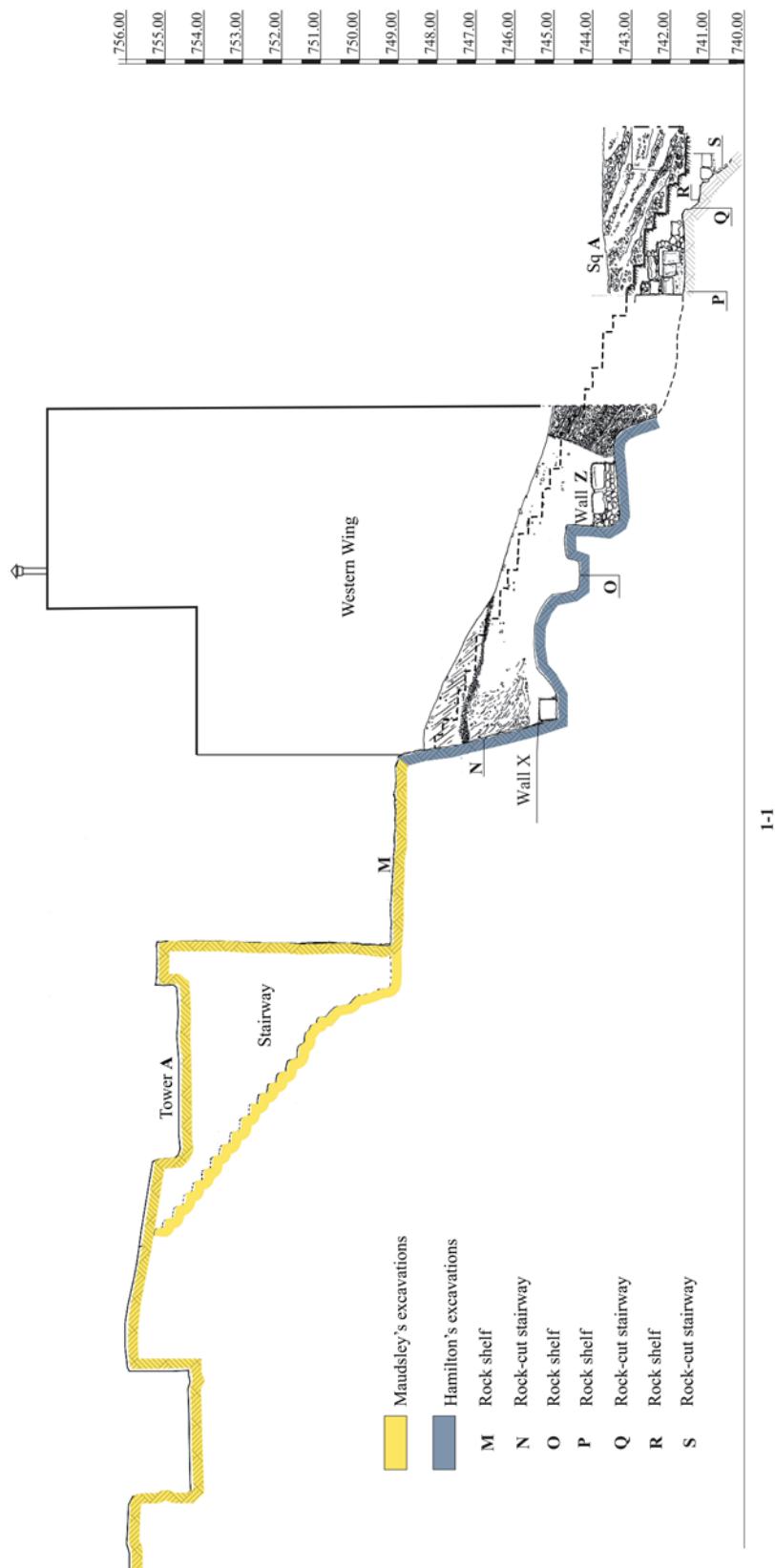


Plan 1. 'The Rock Scarp of Zion' (after Conder 1875a; Schultz 2004).

Mt. Zion; it is exposed for a length of 240 m. In this segment, two rock-hewn bases of additional towers were found (Towers B and D), which protrude from the escarpment. Tower B is somewhat smaller and only partly preserved ( $3 \times 7$  m), and Tower D, which was partly exposed, is identical in size to Tower A. From Tower D, 'the Rock Scarp' continues northeast (E) toward the Room of the Last Supper (coenaculum). Conder believed that in the Second Temple period a road passed through this area and led into the city (Conder 1872:169; 1875a:86; 1875b:10). In addition to the three towers, Conder exposed a short rock-hewn segment (C), which he claimed was a hewn line parallel to the 'Rock Scarp of Zion,' creating a fosse. Wilson (Bliss and Dickie 1898:8), and later Avi-Yonah (1956:309), hypothesized that a gate and a street existed at the opening of the hewn fosse that led to the upper city during the Second Temple period.



Plan 2. Tower A, Hamilton's excavation and Sq A and B, plan and section.



1-1

Plan 2. (cont.)

Along and near the rock escarpment, more than 22 water cisterns, installations, hewn spaces and building remains were found (Plan 1). Noteworthy is hewn Room F, which serves today as the school's quarters and in the past served as its laundry room, as it contains a hewn trough above which is a hewn arch. In the map published by Conder, two rooms appear and the trough is flanked by two additional arches (Plan 4: Sections 1–1, 2–2). While Conder notes that the trough is similar to a sarcophagus and the arch is reminiscent of ancient burial arcosolia, he defines the room as an animal manger/stable of a small garrison that was stationed there (Conder 1875a:84; 1875b:9). From Tower D, the hewn staircase (G) descends toward the base of the escarpment and two Second Temple ritual baths (H; Plan 1; Reich 1990:214–215). In the wake of the excavation finds, it was decided to incorporate the remains in the new wings of the school.

In 2019, the German Protestant Institute for Archaeology (Thiery and Vieweger 2019:32–41) re-excavated the ritual baths and found above them the remains of a grand building with a decorated mosaic from the Byzantine period (Vieweger et al. 2020:280–285). In addition, remains of a building from the Late Roman period were found.<sup>2</sup>

In 1894–1897, Bliss and Dickie carried out archaeological excavations in the Protestant cemetery and on the southern slopes of Mt. Zion (Bliss and Dickie 1898:2–82); these excavations were executed in horizontal tunnels. On the eastern slope of Mt. Zion, part of the First Wall from the Second Temple period was exposed and adjacent to it, the Byzantine city wall from the time of Empress Eudokia I. Likewise, Tower D, was reinvestigated, and its exposure widened. The continuation of Scarp E was exposed and cleaned, and it seems that it was a hewn fosse that extended to the northeast, connecting to the remains of the Medieval city wall, which incorporated towers (J; see Fig. 1). At the foot of Tower D some deep hewing was identified (K), whose nature and connection to the 'Rock Scarp of Zion' and the fortification system was not clarified. Remains of a gate (L) in the Byzantine city wall were also found. Four phases of construction were observed, the earliest of which was dated by Bliss and Dickie to the Hasmonean/Herodian period and the latest, to the Byzantine period. A street ascending north, with a drainage channel underneath it, was also found.

In 1979, Father Bargil Pixner, Shlomo Margalit and Doron Chen re-examined Gate L and claimed that its first building phase should be dated to the Second Temple period (Pixner, Chen and Margalit 1989). They suggested that the gate be identified as the Essene Gate incorporated in the First Wall, which is mentioned in the writings of Josephus (*War V*, 145), but it seems that this identification is incorrect (Zelinger 2010a:300–302). In 2015, a German expedition excavated the gate and the adjacent section of the city wall. According to the excavators, the city wall was built in the Hellenistic period and was modified during the Early Roman period (Vieweger et al. 2020:271–276). The sections of the First Wall's fortifications and Eudokia's wall, which were exposed by Bliss and Dickie near the Latin

<sup>2</sup> The remains from the Late Roman period were excavated by Neria Sapir and Amit Re'em of the Israel Antiquities Authority (Permit No. A-7564); this excavation is not yet published.

cemetery (I) were re-excavated by Zelinger (2010b), and recently, sections of the city wall inside the cemetery were cleaned and re-excavated.<sup>3</sup>

In 1933, Robert Hamilton, director of the British Department of Antiquities, carried out an excavation in the plot intended for the construction of the western wing of the school and published a short report on his discoveries (Hamilton 1935). In his excavations (see Plan 2), a natural rock step (N) was found, which descends from the rock shelf (M) to the foot of Tower A. A large hewn and plastered installation (W), two massive walls (X, Z), founded on a rock shelf (O), a wall stub (Y) and an enormous amount of refuse from the Second Temple period that was dumped on the slope, were exposed. Photographs, plans and summaries written by Hamilton, which were not published but were retrieved from the IAA Mandatory Archive,<sup>4</sup> greatly aided our understanding of the remains and allowed drawing new conclusions.

In the course of the excavations carried out in the vicinity of the school, many large building stones and architectural elements were found at the foot of the quarried scarp. Five stone types were documented (Figs. 4–6): (1) a square stone block with fashioned margins and a crude boss characteristic of the Hasmonean period (Geva 1985:34–35); (2) a stone with marginal dressing and a protruding boss in its center, both of which were smoothed, typical of the Herodian period (Geva 1985:32–34); (3) a well-made and smoothed square stone block, typical of the Roman and Byzantine periods (Weksler-Bdolah 2003:87–91); (4) a stone with a gentle diagonal dressing and cutters' marks, characteristic of the Crusader period (Boas 1999:219–221); (5) a fairly large stone with dressed edges and a crude protruding boss, a type which was usually incorporated in towers and fortifications of the Ayyubid period (Seligman 2001:264).



Fig. 4. The foundations of the main building of the Bishop Gobat School within which are incorporated stone Types A and C in secondary use.

<sup>3</sup> The excavation (Permit No. A-8819), on behalf of the IAA, is not yet published.

<sup>4</sup> File No. SRF\_109 (46/46).

These stones had collapsed from the fortifications along the ‘Scarp of Zion’ and were collected by the excavators and incorporated in the school’s foundations (Fig. 4) and in the Western Wing foundations near the entrance (Fig. 5). The stones are clearly visible in the retaining wall of the Greek Orthodox cemetery to the left of the main entrance to the school (Figs. 6, 7). Either Maudsley or Conder (1875a:82–83) carved the year AD 1887 on one of the stones (Fig. 8) so it would not be mistaken as ancient.



Fig. 5. The entrance to the western wing, with Type E stones incorporated into the building’s foundation in secondary use, looking east.



Fig. 6. Type D stone incorporated into the retaining wall of the Greek Orthodox cemetery with mason’s marks.



Fig. 7. The northern stone face of Tower A; on the opposing side is the retaining wall of the Greek Orthodox cemetery, looking east.



Fig. 8. A stone incorporated in the retaining wall of the Greek Orthodox cemetery, upon which the year was carved either by Maudsley or Conder.

## THE EXCAVATION

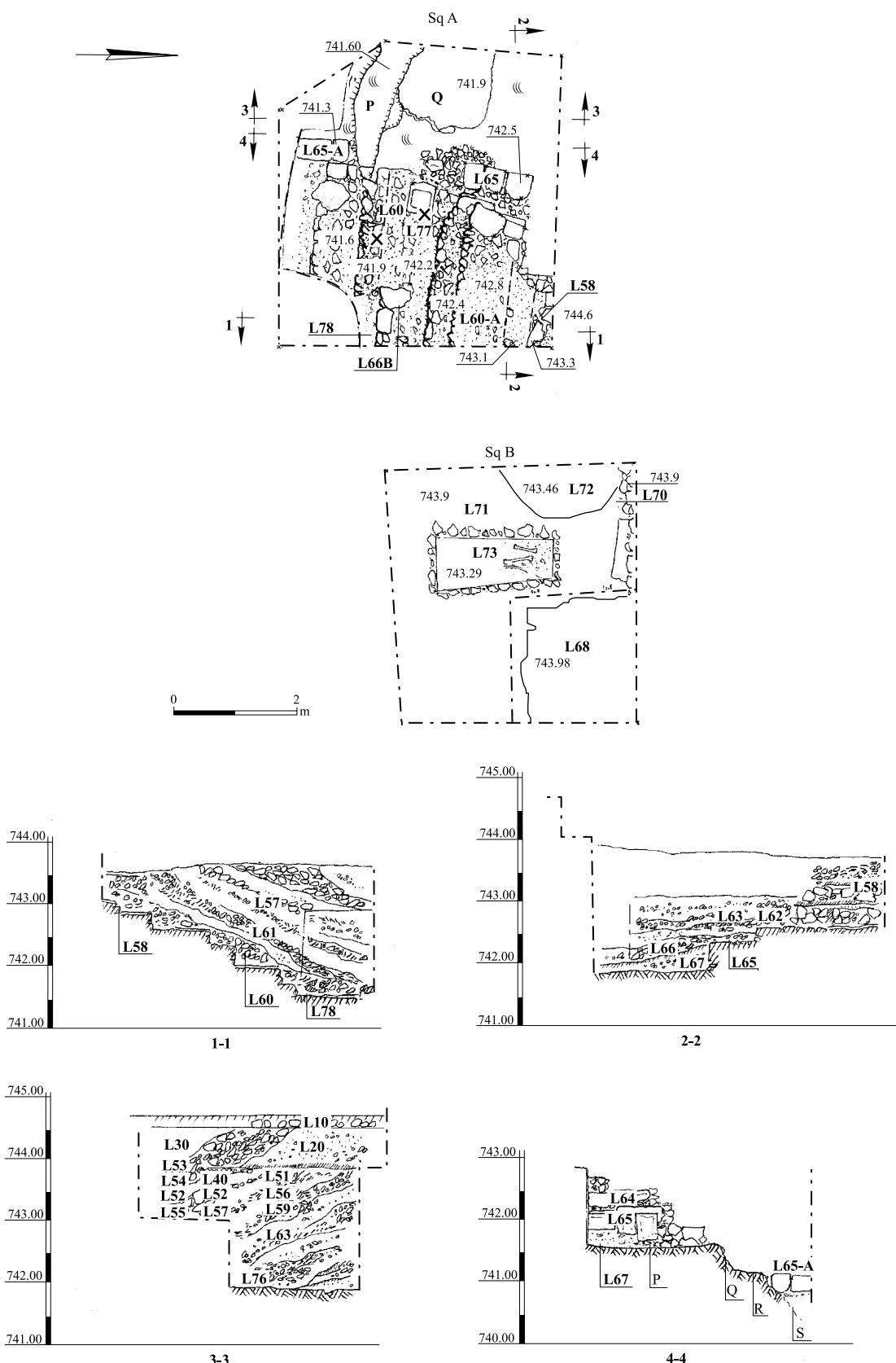
The excavation reported here was carried out in a small plaza outside the school, at the foot of the Western Wing and to its west, in an area that was used in the past as a tennis court (Figs. 1, 9; Plans 1–4); adjacent to the excavation area was an entranceway to the Western Wing (Plan 2). Two squares were opened, A ( $5.5 \times 6.0$  m) and B ( $3.8 \times 4.0$  m), in which five strata were identified (I–III, IVA, IV). In Stratum IV Sq A, dating from the Herodian period (first half of first century CE until 70 CE), a staircase was built on bedrock—it was apparently part of a stepped path; in Stratum IVA, also from the Herodian period, the staircase was covered by debris; Stratum III Sq B included a Crusader-period pit grave; in Stratum II Sq A, a dump covered the slope sealing Strata IV and III, probably dating from the construction of the school in the late Ottoman period, the nineteenth century; Stratum I comprises an escape tunnel from 1948. It is noteworthy that potsherds from the end of the Iron Age were found in the Stratum IVA dump (see Sandhaus, this volume: Fig. 1), adding to the previously uncovered evidence of architectural finds, fortification remains and small finds dating from the late First Temple period (Reich 2000; Geva 2003:506–507).

### Stratum IV (The Herodian period; first half of the first century–70 CE)

In Sq A, a rock surface was found (P), which slopes westward to a shallow rock step (Q) and continues to descend to an additional rock surface (R) (Plans 2: Section 1–1; 3: Section 4–4). Adjacent to the western balk of the square, another, apparently deeper rock step (S)



Fig. 9. Squares A and B; the 1948 escape tunnel is visible to the right of the squares (marked by a thin line), looking west.



Plan 3. Squares A and B, plan and sections.

was found; it descends to another rock step further downslope, beyond the excavation limits. On the surface above Rock Steps Q and S, a small section of the infrastructure of an impressive staircase was exposed; the paving stones did not survive. The infrastructure (3 m wide) comprises seven steps, extending along 4.5 m; their full width is unclear as it was not possible to continue their exposure in Sq B (L70). The general direction of the steps is from southwest to northeast, and they are built on a 40-degree angle (Figs. 10–12). Their lower part, at the base of Rock Step Q, turns at a slight angle of 10 degrees to the southwest.



Fig. 10. Square A, the infrastructure of the stairs and side wall L65 and L65A, looking east.



Fig. 11. Square A, the infrastructure of the stairs, looking west.



Fig. 12. Square A, the southern section showing the Stratum VIA dump that covers the infrastructure of the stairs, looking south.

The infrastructure was excavated at three points (L58, L60, L78; Plan 3: Section 1–1). It is composed of small and medium-sized fieldstones, and flawed building stones (Fig. 13) held together by a hard, yellowish brown mortar. A flawed building stone of Hasmonean type (Fig. 14) and flawed and broken building stones from the Second Temple period (Fig. 15) were found. In the upper western part of Sq B was a heap of stones (L70) identical in quality to those of the infrastructure; it is possible that these are remains of the southern part of the staircase. The continued exposure of this stone heap was not possible, but it seems that there were additional steps a few meters beyond the 3 m that were exposed.

The stepped infrastructure (c. 0.25 m high) has a rhythm in which a wide tread (0.9 m) and a narrow tread (0.4–0.5 m) alternate. It is possible that this staircase is part of a stepped path that led from Hinnom Valley to Mt. Zion. Similar steps are known from other public constructions of the Herodian and Roman periods, for example, in the stairway outside the Hulda Gates (Ben-Dov 1982:109–113), the Tombs of the Kings (Kon 1947:31–34), in the stepped street in the City of David (Shukron and Reich 2007), in the Chain Gate (Kogan-Zehavi 1997; Abu-Riya 1992; Gershuny 1992) and in ritual baths (*miqwa'ot*; Reich 1990).

Three coins were found within the infrastructure, following its examination with a metal detector (L77; two are marked with an × on Plan 3): a coin from the time of Antiochus III (198–187 BCE; see Ariel, this volume: Coin No. 1), a coin from the time of Alexander Jannaeus (80–76 BCE; see Ariel, this volume: Coin No. 15) and a coin from the time of



Fig. 13. Square A, the infrastructure of the stairs,  
looking southeast.



Fig. 14. Square A, a flawed stone of  
Hasmonean type incorporated into the  
infrastructure of the stairs, looking southeast.



Fig. 15. A stone with signs of combed hewing  
in the infrastructure of the stairs.

Tiberius Caesar and the governor, Pontius Pilate (30–31 CE; see Ariel, this volume: Coin No. 31). It seems that the infrastructure was superposed by a pavement of large, carefully worked stone slabs, like those that were exposed in the stepped street in the City of David and the Hulda Gates. Based on the patches of mortar on the wide treads (L60, L60A; Fig. 16), it appears that the slabs were glued to the infrastructure with white mortar made of lime, earth, pieces of charcoal and fine stone gravel. The paving slabs did not survive, and it seems that they were either robbed or intentionally disassembled—perhaps in the Second Temple period when the stairs were sealed by a contemporary dump (see below, Stratum IVA).

Remains of the northern side of the staircase were exposed in two sections (L65, L65A), between which was a gap, apparently caused by stone robbing (see Figs. 10, 11). Only a single well-built ashlar course of this side remains ( $0.3 \times 0.4$  m average size, 0.4 m high; Fig. 17). Between the stones was a whitish mortar that is identical in quality to the mortar patches found on the steps' tread (Fig. 18). The stones of the northern side were laid on a bedding of earth and small fieldstones (L67; 0.36 m thick), which was used to level the bedrock for construction (Fig. 19). Pottery found in the bedding dated to the end of the first century BCE–first century CE (see Sandhaus, this volume: Fig. 2). Apparently, the stones of the northern side were robbed or disassembled already in the Second Temple period.

Above the ashlar course (L65) was a thin infrastructure of hard, packed, yellowish brown mortar (L64; Plan 3: Section 4–4; Fig. 20), which is identical to that found adjacent the northern side of the staircase (L65A). Bedding 67 was sealed by a layer (L66) that was attached to the slope of the steps in the north (Plan 3: Section 2–2; Fig. 21). Pottery from



Fig. 16. Square A, the whitish mortar material on the tread of the stairs.



Fig. 17. Square A, the side wall of the stairs (L65), looking southeast.



Fig. 18. Square A, overhead view of wall L65 with whitish mortar material on top.



Fig. 19. Square A, wall L65 with the bedding layer (L67) beneath it, looking south.



Fig. 20. Square A, wall L65 and above it the brown infrastructure layer (L64), looking east.

the first century CE was found in Bedding 67 (see Sandhaus, this volume: Fig. 2:1–8) and two coins were found in Layer 66, one of John Hyrcanus (see Ariel, this volume: Coin No. 3) and another of Agrippa I (14–24 CE; see Ariel, this volume: Coin No. 34). It is possible that the origin of Layers 66 and 67 was the mortar between the stones of the wall, which accumulated along the wall following the stone robbing of wall L65. Alternatively, Layers 66 and 67 may have served as a bedding or was used to support the external face of wall L65.



Fig. 21. Square A, wall L65 covered with brown infrastructure material (L64, L66), looking east.

#### **Stratum IVA (The Herodian period)**

In Sq A, above Rock Surface P (Plans 2, 3), was a dump layer from the end of the Second Temple period (L20, L40, L51, L52, L56, L57, L59, L61, L62, L63, L75, L76; Plan 3: Section 3–3) that covered the slope (Fig. 22). This dump was excavated to a depth of 3 m, and it seems that its accumulation was even deeper considering that Hamilton had excavated its upslope continuation (Hamilton 1935:142). Large amounts of this dump were removed from the excavation area when the school and tennis court were established.

The dump that was deposited above the steps took the form of the slope of the stairway (Plan 3: Section 1–1; Fig. 11). It contained gray earth and gravel, as well as pottery dated to the first century CE, primarily cooking pots (see Sandhaus, this volume: Figs. 5, 6); some pottery from the end of the Iron Age; and fragments of chalkstone vessels (see Amit, this volume; Fig. 23), fresco fragments (Fig. 24), white plaster, lumps of lead and metal objects (Fig. 25), including lead slingstones (Fig. 26), from the Hellenistic period (Sivan and Solar 2000:173–174). Twenty coins were also found in this dump: 3 from the time of Alexander Jannaeus, 3 from the time of Herod, 1 from the time of Archelaus, 7 from the time of the Roman governors, 4 from the time of Agrippa I, 1 from the time of the Claudius from 41–54 CE, and 1 from the time of Leo I from the years 457–474 CE, which apparently derives



Fig. 22. Square A, northern section and Stratum IVA dump that covered the stairs' infrastructure, looking north.



Fig. 23. Chalkstone vessel fragments from Stratum IVA.

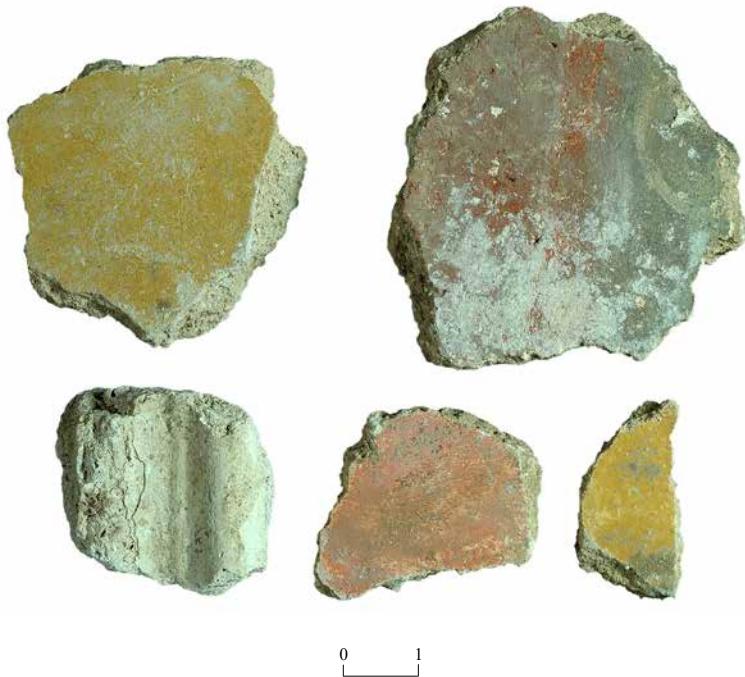


Fig. 24. Fresco and stucco fragments from Stratum IVA.



Fig. 25. Metal and lead objects from Stratum IVA.



Fig. 26. Lead slingstone from Stratum IVA.

from a disturbance in the section during excavation (see Ariel, this volume: Coin Nos. 6, 7, 12, 17, 19, 22, 24–28, 30, 32, 33, 35–39, 45). Note that no glass was found in the dump and hardly any animal bones were discerned. Furthermore, it was not possible to identify a chronological stratigraphy, i.e., the later remains were not necessarily in the upper loci. Technically, it seems that there was one, homogeneous layer, which contained finds ranging in date from the time of John Hyrcanus to the destruction of the Second Temple. Therefore, the date of this dump should be fixed between the first half of the first century and 70 CE.

### **Stratum III (The Crusader period; twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE)**

In Sq B a pit grave was exposed (L73; Plan 3), which was excavated to the depth of one meter below ground surface into a grayish earth layer (L71) that contained pottery from the time of the Second Temple period (not illustrated); this layer is identical to the Second Temple period dump in nearby Sq A (see above). The grave is trapezoidal, orientated west–east (Fig. 27), and its walls are built of fieldstones. The grave was dug into a layer of packed limestone (L68, L72), perhaps a floor.

Human lower limbs were found in the eastern part of the grave, indicating that the head was located in the west and the interred lay supine. With the discovery of the burial, the excavation was halted and the square was sealed.<sup>5</sup> Such pit graves, trapezoidal in shape with a supine internment, are typical of the Crusader period (Re'em 1999:257–267). Another nearby trapezoidal Crusader-period slabstone was noted by Maudsley (Clermont-Ganneau 1889:276–279). Crusader-written sources note that the area of Mt. Zion was a cemetery during that period (Benvenisti 1970:31), and thus, this grave should be associated with this stratum.

<sup>5</sup> The excavation was terminated owing to pressure from ultraorthodox parties. The grave was drawn on a plan based on photographs and personal observation of the author.



Fig. 27. Square B, Stratum III pit grave, looking east.

#### Stratum II (Late Ottoman period; nineteenth century CE)

In Sqs A and B, a dump layer was identified at the bottom of the slope. It contained quarry gravel, fragments of building stones and a grayish earth fill (L10, L30, L53, L54, L55; Plan 3: Section 3–3; Fig. 28). In this layer, some fragments of porcelain and glazed pottery were found, which date to the nineteenth century CE (Fig. 29). Hamilton also identified this layer at the upper part of the slope (Hamilton 1935:142), assuming that its origin was the construction of the buildings of the Bishop Gobat School, when building waste and quarry refuse were thrown downslope.



Fig. 28. Square A, the northern section of the square; in the upper part is a Stratum II gravel dump, looking north.



Fig. 29. Pottery fragments from Stratum II, including porcelain.

### Stratum I (mid-twentieth century CE)

Near Sq A, the exit of an escape tunnel (L1) from the War of Independence was cleared and re-exposed (Plan 2; Figs. 30, 31). Apparently, the beginning of the tunnel is at the edge of the large building of Mishkenot Sha'ananim and continues under the street that crosses the



Fig. 30. The termination of the escape tunnel near the entrance to the Western Wing, looking northeast.



Fig. 31. The escape tunnel, looking west.

Hinnom Valley and terminates at the entrance to the western wing of the school; the exit to the western wing and the surface was via eight concrete steps. The tunnel was installed prior to the conquest of Mt. Zion in 1948, when Palmah fighters attempted to break into the Jewish Quarter. Afterwards, when Mt. Zion became an Israeli enclave in Jordanian territory and access was difficult and dangerous, the tunnel was used to evacuate the wounded and to transfer supplies, ammunition and military forces. The tunnel was used for several months, but apparently did not fulfil its purpose and was replaced by a cable car, which crossed the Hinnom Valley and connected Mt. Zion and St. John Hospital near the Cinematheque. The tunnel (1.3 m wide) was cleared along 13 m, its sides covered with reinforced concrete. The floor was made of concrete and covered by tin plates that rested upon support beams. At its exit, the opening was covered by steel plates that could be quickly opened and recovered (Fig. 32).



Fig. 32. Steel plates covering the opening of the escape tunnel.

#### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The excavation was conducted in a small and limited area and therefore, the conclusions are drawn with caution. Nevertheless, the excavation results, and the information gleaned from nearby excavations and recent research, permit a renewed discussion of the three principal elements uncovered: the stairway, the dump and the 'Rock Scarp of Zion.' Presented below are the author's insights, as well as suggestions for future research.

#### **The Stairway**

The nature of the steps exposed in Stratum IV is not entirely clear as they were found in a very limited area and were not exposed along their entire length or width. The steps do not seem to have been part of a large *miqweh*, as the Jerusalem ritual baths are known to have been entirely rock-hewn and not built (Reich 1990:47–49). Also, the absence of grayish hydraulic plaster, typical of Second Temple period water installations (Reich 1990:53–54), the size of the steps and their moderate angle, as well as the fact that they were found on a steep slope, rule out this possibility. The possibility that the steps were part of a structure, such as an ornate tomb, was also ruled out due to the location on a steep slope. Therefore, it seems that the stairway was part of a stepped path, dating from the first half of the first

century CE, that connected the Hinnom Valley with the western part of Mt. Zion, the Upper City in the Second Temple period. Such a path would not be surprising given that Jerusalem is surrounded by valleys and mountains and stepped access ways are efficacious in such topographical conditions. Similar remains were found on the Mount of Olives, in the area of the Russian Church of Mary Magdalene. This stepped way ascends to the Mount of Olives and according to Christian belief Jesus walked this path when he entered Jerusalem (Schiller 1992:181). In the confines of the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu on Mount Zion a “Scala Santa” was excavated that descends from the church to the Siloam Pool (Germer-Durand 1914:244–245). These steps are generally accepted as dating to the Byzantine period, but according to tradition they are identified as the stairway that Jesus walked from the room of the Last Supper to Gethsemane and from Gethsemane to the palace of Caiaphas (Schiller 1992:187). An additional possibility is that the steps were intended to bridge the acute difference in height between the natural rock steps of the steep southwestern slope of Mount Zion, and they may have been an attempt to create a moderate ascent. The question is why the continuation of the stairway was not discovered in Hamilton’s excavations upslope? It is possible that the tread stones were robbed, swept away or damaged by later building activities, such as Wall Z excavated by Hamilton (see Plan 2). Alternatively, they may have been used in the building of the Stratum III tomb in Sq B, as the grave’s stones are reminiscent of those incorporated in the infrastructure of the steps.

If the steps exposed in the excavation were indeed part of a stepped path, they would have led to a gate in the southwestern corner of the First Wall. Such a path was a necessity here during the Second Temple period, as it offered easy access to agricultural plots, family burial grounds (Kloner 1980:57–59; Barkay 2000:92–93), quarries (Avner and Zelinger 2001:124), the Pool of the Snakes in the area of the Siloam Pool (Avi-Yonah 1956:319), and possibly, to the hippodrome/stadium/amphitheater mentioned by Josephus (Kloner 2001:164; Kloner and Whetstone 2010:167–174).

It appears that the steps operated only a short time. Based on the latest numismatic evidence retrieved from their infrastructure (L66), the steps were built no earlier than the time of Pontius Pilate, during the reign of Emperor Tiberius or of Agrippa I (see Ariel, this volume: Nos. 3, 34). The steps were sealed by the Stratum IVA dump, which is dated, based on the latest coins and pottery, to the first half of the first century CE to 70 CE, during the reign of Agrippa I (41–42 CE) and Valerius Gratus (54 CE). If so, then the steps went out of use just before the destruction of the Second Temple. It may be concluded that the steps were used for some 30 years and that the tread stones were disassembled and robbed before the destruction of the Temple. Alternatively, the dump that sealed the steps might have accumulated or brought there after the destruction of the Second Temple, and thus, the robbing of the tread stones occurred after 70 CE.

Another issue addressed following the exposure of the stairway is the date of its installation. In the excavation of the Chain Street from the Second Temple period, a coin from the time of Pontius Pilate (26–36 CE) was found under the pavement (Kogan-Zehavi 1997), as well as sherds from the first century CE (Abu-Raya 1992; Gershuny 1992).

Beneath the continuation of the paved street within the City of David, which ascends to the Temple Mount below Robinson's Arch, 15 coins were found (Reich and Billig 1999:35); the latest coins there also date to the time of Pontius Pilate. Along the western city wall, near the southwestern corner, Magen Broshi excavated an entrance plaza with steps, apparently leading to a gate in the Second Temple period city wall. Under the pavement of the steps were finds from the first century CE (Wightman 1993:140, 191). Reich and Shukron, who excavated beneath the paved street adjacent to Robinson's Arch, suggested that the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount was built in the second quarter of the first century CE (Reich and Shukron 2011:68–69). The finds from this excavation, as well as those conducted along the paved street within the city of David, indicate that extensive public building activities, such as the arrangement of streets and the establishment of fortifications, were carried out in Jerusalem during the rule of Pontius Pilate and Agrippa I, and the first prefects (Szanton et al. 2019) or, as defined by Reich and Shukron, "in the last generation before the destruction of the Temple" (Shukron and Reich 2007:20). From Josephus' writings it emerges that these building activities should be attributed to Agrippa I (*War* 5.4.2) or Agrippa II (*Aniquities* 20.9.7; 222). These construction projects were not long-lived and went out of use at the time of the destruction of the Temple or even beforehand.

If there were a gate in the southwestern area of Mount Zion, which was reached via the stepped path, it is possible that the 'Rock Scarp of Zion' and the towers had destroyed the gate. The remains of Tower A, Rock Shelf M at its foot, and Rock Step N might be the remains of that gate. On the southern face of Tower A are remains of hewn steps (Plans 2, 3) whose nature is unclear, as Bishop Gobat School is built above them. The steps are not related to the hewn tower, as it would be illogical to place steps on the external face of a tower. They are also not constructed in the typical Second Temple period style, in which narrow and wide treads alternate, and they may continue the steps exposed in our excavation. Therefore, it seems that these steps preceded Tower A, which cut them. But, as they have not been excavated, the possibility that they are a later addition cannot be ruled out.

Two gates are known along the western and southwestern faces of the First Wall, both of which have been identified by scholars with the Gate of the Essenes mentioned in the writings of Josephus (*War* IV, 2). One is located in the Protestant Cemetery (Pixner, Chen and Margalit 1989:85–95), and is apparently dated to the Byzantine period (Gibson 2007:29), and the other is located along the western city wall (Gibson 2007:25–30), but has not been fully published. The question remains as to whether the stepped path exposed in this excavation may have led to an ancient gate in the First Wall and whether it should be identified with the Gate of the Essenes.

## The Dump

The Stratum IVA dump exposed in Sq A is identical in its ceramic and numismatic finds to the dump from the Herodian city that was excavated on the eastern slope of the City of David (Reich and Shukron 2003; Reich and Bar-Oz 2006; Gadot 2016) and on the southern

slopes of Mt. Zion (Greenwald 2011). Coins collected among the finds included some that date to 66–70 CE; however, coins from the period following the 70 CE destruction are absent. Ariel pointed out that the numismatic evidence declines significantly after 70 CE (Ariel 1982:291), i.e., in the period between the Revolts, and therefore it is possible that the dump was piled up after the destruction of the Temple and that is why coins of that period are absent. Thus, *a priori*, it may be concluded that statistically it is possible that a small excavation such as this might not yield any coins from the period after the destruction; however, the chalkstone vessels and the pottery may suggest that the dump was piled up before the destruction of the Temple. This conclusion can be strengthened by the fact that the use of chalkstone vessels in Jerusalem ended with the 70 CE destruction, continuing in the rural areas for some time after, until the Bar Kochba Revolt (Magen 2000:256).

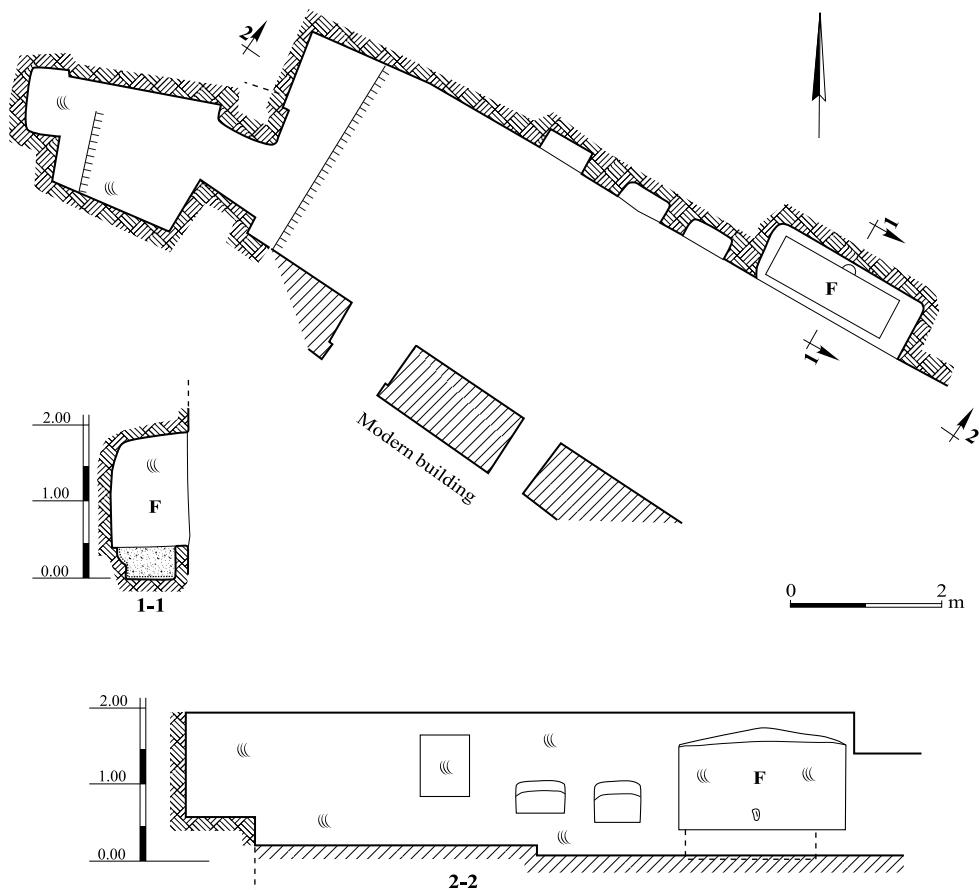
The excavators of the eastern slope of the City of David concluded that the dumps contained garbage originating from the city and the Temple Mount that had piled up during a time span of 100–200 years (Reich and Shukron 2003:14; Gadot 2016:161–162). The excavators of the southern slope of Mount Zion argue, too, that the dump is an accumulation of refuse that had piled up over hundreds of years (Greenwald 2011:48; Zelinger 2010b). This excavation provides a stratigraphic and chronological datum that can limit the period of the piling up of the dump on the steps to between the third and the sixth decades of the first century CE. The excavated dump seals the stairway, which was built no earlier than the third or fourth decade of the first century CE, but not after 70 CE. This attests that the dump in Sq A had accumulated within a 30-year period. While a city dump can considerably pile up over 30 years, it is questionable whether this layer may be defined as a city dump, for what would be the point in covering in refuse a just recently constructed path? Apparently, additional archaeological excavations on the western slope are necessary to fully understand the Mount Zion dump. It may be suggested that the dump was piled up as part of a Roman siege ramp in preparation for the conquest of Jerusalem; this suggestion, however, requires further support. The Roman siege ramp near the western city wall (Herod's palace) is mentioned by Josephus (*War VI*, 374). In Jesus's prophecy of the city's destruction, it is said “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.” (Luke 19:41–44).

### **'The Rock Scarp of Zion'**

Some scholars claim that 'The Rock Scarp of Zion' and its hewn towers were part of the course of the First Temple period city wall (Bliss and Dickie 1898:334; Bahat 2011), which was reused in the Second Temple period (Avi-Yonah 1956:309; Tsafrir 1975:208–211; Geva 1985:26; 1993; Barkay 1988:152; Wightman 1993:146, Fig. 40; Bahat 2011). Some of them are of the opinion that the infrastructure for the Second Temple period fortifications was reused in the Byzantine (Geva 1993; Bahat 2011), Early Islamic (Ben-Dov 1993; Bahat 2011) and the Crusader/Ayyubid (Wightman 1993:210–211, 247, Fig. 67; Seligman

2001:261, 273; Hawari 2007:23, Fig. 3; Bahat 2011) periods. Scholars of the Crusader/Ayyubid period rely on historical sources for this determination, principally the notion of the encircling of Mount Zion with fortifications in this period (see below). In my opinion, ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ should not be connected to the course of the First Wall as its origin is in the Middle Ages, in the Crusader/Ayyubid period, the twelfth to thirteenth centuries CE or, more precisely, the Ayyubid period. To establish this assumption, the following circumstantial evidence is presented:

1. Conder and Barkay suggested that the hewn room (F; Plan 4), the “manger,” was a tomb from the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (Conder 1875a:84; 1875b:9; Barkay 1988:153; Schultz 2004:69–70), as it strongly resembles the arcosolia found in the burial complexes of Jerusalem and dated to the first century CE (Kloner 1980:231–235), e.g., the burial complex at Akeldama (Avni and Greenhut 1996:11–12, 18–20, 25–34) and the Tombs of the Kings (Kon 1947:62–68). The hewing of the arcosolium is quite precise, its sides are straight, its vault is rounded and at its base is a sarcophagus-like hewn trough (Figs. 33, 34). Following our investigation of the hewn room, it is clear that the ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ cuts it and possibly also other adjacent rooms (Fig. 35). The Scarp destroys the southern half of the hewn room and puts it out of use. If the hewn room was indeed part of a first-century CE burial complex, then the location of the burial within the limits of a Second Temple period fortified city must be considered. Alternately, if this were a Roman–Byzantine-period burial complex, then the ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ postdates the installation of the cave and is not a vestige of the First Wall.
2. Historical reports from the Crusader period relating to the city walls are scarce. The sources claim that during this period the walls were repaired twice, in 1116 and in 1177 CE (Boas 2001:44), and perhaps also after the Treaty of Jaffa in 1192 CE (Boas 2001:45). In contrast, the historical reports from the Ayyubid period note clearly that there were extensive fortification activities, including the quarrying of a fosse and the construction of walls. The walls were installed by order of Saladin, and al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa repaired them; the sources emphasize the enclosure of Mount Zion within a fortification system (Mujir al-Din 1876:78–79; Bahat 1991:122–123).
3. The Marino Sanuto Map, dated to 1321 CE, depicts the wall surrounding Mount Zion and the fosse that crosses to the Coenaculum (Bahat 1987). The map describes the course of the wall after its destruction by al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa. The wall follows the course of ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ and the fosse.
4. At the foot of the Scarp, the collapse of the fortifications rises above the cliff line. It contained many scattered and large building stones (Conder 1875a:82; 1875b:8; Bliss and Dickie 1898:6), some of early types (see above, *History of Research*: Types 1–3), but mostly of later types (see above, *History of Research*: Types 4, 5). This collapse compliments the



Plan 4. Room F, plan and sections.



Fig. 33. Room F on the 'The Rock Scarp of Zion', looking north.



Fig. 34. The trough in Room F.



Fig. 35. The rock sides of the hewn space, in which Room F is installed, are cut by 'The Rock Scarp of Zion' (the modern wall painted in brown marks the cut), looking west.

historical description that notes that al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa destroyed the city walls out of fear of a renewal of the crusades (Bahat 1991:122–127). Crusader/Ayyubid stones that were found in the collapse date the final use of this fortification line, but do not attest to the date of their foundation. It appears that the only *in situ* fortification is ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ and its tower, which should be dated to the Middle Ages. Bliss and Dickie documented three ashlar courses upon the rock base of Tower D (Bliss and Dickie 1898:5–6). Their report does not detail whether the ashlar masonry belongs to Type 1 or 5, but it should be noted that Bliss and Dickie excavated a masonry collapse at the foot of the tower, from which it originated, and part of these stones are of Type 4 from the Crusader period. A Crusader-period pilaster with engaged pillars was incorporated in the tower in secondary use (Bliss and Dickie 1898:6). Thus, it may be concluded that the tower was constructed in the Crusader period. Bliss and Dickie do not note if the courses were built in the headers and stretchers method, as the First Wall, but they do note that the spaces between the stones were filled with mortar (Bliss and Dickie 1898:5–9). The First Wall is characterized by dry construction in all its known sections: along the western city wall (Broshi and Gibson 2000:150); on the southern slopes of Mount Zion (Bliss and Dickie 1898:15–47; Zelinger 2010a); in the Citadel area (Geva 2000:159–160; Sivan and Solar 2000:170); and in the Jewish Quarter (Geva 2000:161–177, 218–232). In contrast, the use of mortar is widespread in the construction of fortifications of medieval Jerusalem and elsewhere (Kedar and Kaufman 1975; Broshi and Tsafir 1977; Kedar and Mook 1978; Reich and Shukron 2006:129; Weksler-Bdolah 2006:109), and therefore Tower D should be dated to the Middle Ages.

5. Along the length of ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ there were no building remains that could be dated to the Second Temple or Byzantine period. Moreover, sections of fortifications from these periods are close to the ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ (Bliss and Dickie 1898:15–47; Broshi and Gibson 2000:150–151; Zelinger 2010b). These data strengthen the assumption that the quarrying of ‘The Rock Scarp of Zion’ is not connected to the line of the First Wall.

6. Massive towers with rock-cut foundations are mentioned by Josephus (*War V, IV, 1–4*), Strabo (*Geography XVI:40*) and Tacitus (*Histories V:11*), in their description of the towers incorporated in the First Wall; however, the archaeological data attests otherwise. The heretofore known towers along the First Wall are incorporated in the rock, but they are not quarried and do not bear the characteristic hewing of the ‘Rock Scarp of Zion’ like the Second Temple period towers along the western city wall (Broshi and Gibson 2000:150–151), the southern slopes of Mt. Zion (Bliss and Dickie 1898:15–47; Zelinger 2010b), the Citadel area (Geva 2000:158; Sivan and Solar 2000:170) and the Jewish Quarter (Geva and Avigad 2000:161–177, 218–232). In contrast, quarried fosses, rock uprights and hewn columns were found in fortifications dated to the Middle Ages, such as the fosse quarried at the foot of the Rockefeller Museum, Burj al-Laqlaq and the Tancred Tower in the southwestern corner of the Old City, and the quarried fosse and towers in Mamilla near Jaffa Gate (for

a summary of the finds, see Seligman 2001:261–276; Reich and Shukron 2006:125–152). This phenomenon is well-known also in the construction of Crusader fortifications outside the limits of Jerusalem, such as Caesarea, Ashqelon and Arsuf (Pringle 1997:20, 21, 43).

7. On Bliss and Dickie's plan of the vicinity of the Protestant cemetery, it appears that hewn Fosse E, near the southeastern corner of 'The Rock Scarp of Zion,' cuts the line of the First Wall and the City Wall of Eudokia. This fact attests that the fosse is later than those walls (Bliss and Dickie 1898: Pl. I: General Plan 2).

8. In the cisterns and water installations incorporated along the length of the cliff, the excavators identified a reddish hydraulic plaster mixed with pottery that dates largely to the Islamic period or even later (Conder 1875a:84; 1875b:8–9).

Identifying the presumed continuation of the First Wall in the southwestern part of Mt. Zion may be aided by the publication of Hamilton (1935) and by the photographs and sections in the Mandatory Archive in the Rockefeller Museum (see above, n. 4). At the foot of Rock Shelf M, Hamilton exposed a natural rock step (N) that was revealed to a height of 4 m, in which natural karstic hollows were sealed by a fieldstone construction (Plans 2, 3; Fig. 36). At the bottom of the shelf, another rock surface (O) was excavated. At the foot of this rock surface, above and adjacent to Rock Shelf N, Hamilton exposed the remains of a massive wall (X; 7 m long, c. 1.5 m wide, c. 1.3 m high; Plans 2, 3; Figs. 37, 38), of which two built ashlar courses of Hasmonean type survived. It appears that Wall X covered the rock shelf and continued along its length. A dump similar to that found in our excavation and dated to the Herodian period covered the remains of this wall (Plan 3; Fig. 39). Hamilton did not ascribe importance to this wall. This wall seems to have served as a terrace/retaining wall; alternately, the wall might be part of the First Wall as it follows its presumed course along



Fig. 36. Hamilton's excavations: Rock Shelf B, looking east.

the lower third of the Mount Zion slope, continuing the wall found by Bliss and Dickie (see Plan 1; Fig. 1). Wall Z (8 m long, c. 2 m wide), found in Hamilton's excavation, is made of hard-packed fieldstones and seals the natural hollows in the rock (Hamilton 1935); Hamilton identified the wall as a terrace (Plans 2, 3; Fig. 40). Based on the excavation



Fig. 37. Hamilton's excavations: Wall X, looking southeast.



Fig. 38. Hamilton's excavations: Wall X, facade.

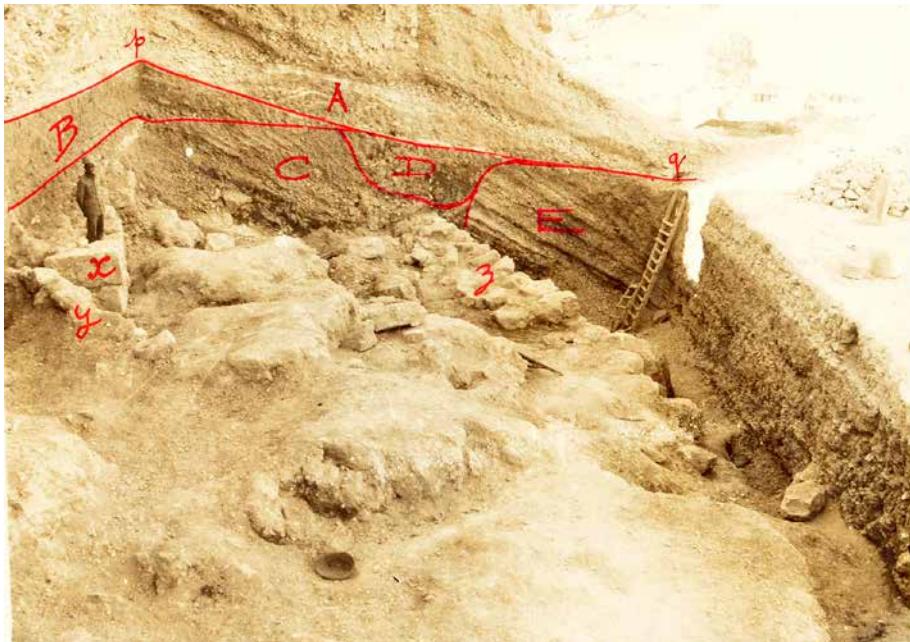


Fig. 39. Hamilton's excavations: dump and walls (labelled on the photograph by Hamilton), looking south.



Fig. 40. Hamilton's excavations: Wall Z, a robber trench and the foundation visible in the section, looking south.

photographs and the drawn section above Wall Z, there were apparently robber trenches that penetrated the Second Temple period fills. Along the western, external side of the wall, it is possible to distinguish a foundation trench that also penetrates the Second Temple period dump. Therefore, Wall Z is later than the Herodian period and its construction apparently damaged the stairway. I suggest that the wall is the foundation of a massive wall, possibly the Byzantine city wall, whose continuation was exposed downslope east of the excavations of Bliss and Dickie and those of Zelinger.

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