DID JOAB CLIMB "WARREN'S SHAFT"?

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Although it has become fashionable to put a question-mark next to practically every tradition in the Old Testament which has to do with history prior to the Babylonian exile, there remains nevertheless what is at least a plausible tradition to the effect that in the time of David the Jebusite city of Jerusalem became an Israelite possession and the capital of a united Israel, although the latter phase may have taken place first under David’s successor in Jerusalem, Solomon.

As is well known, there are two accounts in the Old Testament of this "seizure of power", namely in 2 Samuel 5:6-10 and 1 Chron 11:4-9.

2 Samuel 5:6-10

The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites living in the land. And they said to David: "You shall not come in here unless you remove the blind and the lame", saying: "You shall not come in here". But David captured the stronghold of Zion, which is the city of David. And David said on that day: "Whoever smites a Jebusite w’jiggat bəsšinor, and the lame and the blind are hated by David". That is why they say: "A blind and a lame shall not enter the house". And David settled in the stronghold, and he named it "City of David" . . . . . . .

1 Chron 11:4-9

David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus, and there were the Jebusites living in the land. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David: "You shall not come in here." But David captured the stronghold of Zion, which is the city of David. And David said: "Whoever smites a Jebusite first shall become chief and commander". And Joab son of Zeruiah went up first and he became chief. And David settled in the stronghold; that is why they called it "City of David".

Theories as to the course of events depend upon how one evaluates these texts in relation to one another. It is immediately apparent that
we have to do with one and the same event. But there are notable differences, including the fact that 2 Sam contains the “special material” according to which the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the town, announce to David before the taking of the town that he cannot enter without removing the blind and the lame; we are also told that these blind and lame are hated by David, for which reason we are told that the blind and the lame may not come into the “house”. Moreover, apparently as part of the plan of attack we also find the expression \( \text{w'yigga}' \text{ baššinor} \). It is specifically with the meaning of this expression that we shall be concerned in the following.

Unlike this account, 1 Chron 11:6 understands David’s words \( \text{kāl makkeh jēbusī} \), which are attested in both versions, to be a challenge from David to perform an heroic deed. Thus, when Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was the first to go up he was rewarded by being made some sort of leader, a אֹ֣דֶם. Now the Chronicler’s version has often rather uncritically been regarded as a mere explanatory supplement to the book of Samuel, which has been understood to be the source of the Chronicler. It has been possible in this connexion to use the remark about Joab as an explanation of \( \text{w'yigga}' \text{ baššinôr} \). The absence of the expression itself in Chronicles has been explained as an omission by the author which was motivated by the fact that he did not understand it, “wie es uns ja auch geht”, as Rudolph almost sorrowfully says in his commentary.1

However, it is not only unreasonable to attempt to create a single account from the two narratives; it is also unlikely that the author of Chronicles knew the Books of Samuel in their present form. A closer comparison of the two texts shows that there is an almost verbatim agreement in a number of phrases which, read in context, supply a brief notice as to David’s conquest of the town: And David and his men2 went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land.3 And they said to David, “You cannot come in

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2 The reason why 2 Sam 5:6 says “the king and his men” is presumably that the immediately preceding context relates how David was made king. The more usual expression is “David and his men”, which recurs repeatedly throughout the Books of Samuel. However, it does not occur in Chronicles, which tendentiously changes it to “all Israel”.
3 The difference between jōšeḇ (Sam.) and jōšbei (Chron.) is insignificant, but the choice determines whether the following verb is in the singular (Sam.) or the plural (Chron.).