

THE HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS FROM CAVE 2 AT 'EN HAKHLIL, MIGDAL HA-'EMEQ

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INTRODUCTION

Human skeletal remains were uncovered in the excavation of Cave 2 at 'En Hakhilil, dated to EB I–II (see Shalev, this volume). The site is located in proximity to the Early Bronze Age settlement of Tel Shadud, from which the buried individuals may have originated.

The remains were examined in the field, and subsequently reburied on-site. The cranial and postcranial material was extremely fragmentary and in a very poor state of preservation, precluding estimation of the age at death and sex. Moreover, the bones were scattered across the cave and thus, it was not possible to reconstruct the original burial postures and practices. However, careful sieving of the excavated soil yielded a relatively large sample of teeth, from which demographic data could be obtained. The teeth from all loci were considered as a single assemblage.

The type and anatomical position of the teeth were identified, and the age estimation was based on the stage of tooth development and attrition, following criteria commonly used by the IAA osteological laboratory (Hillson 1993:176–201; Nagar 2012). The results are summarized in Table 1, and a more detailed presentation of the data is available in the IAA Archives (Permit No. A-7325).

THE FINDS

The skeletal remains from Cave 2 represent at least 19 individuals: 4 infants, up to three years old—the youngest of which is represented by two deciduous tooth buds and aged up to half a year; 7 children, up to fifteen years old; and 8 adults of a wide age range. The remains indicate an age distribution of a normal civilian population.

Data concerning the 19 individuals from 'En Hakhilil were compared with data retrieved from seven other EB I burial caves from Tel Esur in the central coastal plain, in which the human remains were also extremely fragmentary (Nagar 2010; forthcoming; Nagar and Winocur 2016); the Tel Esur burials were examined on-site using the same methods as in the present excavation. At Tel Esur, a large-scale burial took place over a long period. The

Table 1. Description of Teeth and Age at Death Estimations

Tooth Type	Age at Death (years)								
	<1	1–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	>50
Deciduous upper 1st molars	2								
Deciduous lower 1st molars		4	1						
Deciduous upper 2nd molars	1	4							
Permanent central incisors		3	1			1	2	1	1
Upper premolars			1		2	2		1	1
Permanent lower 1st molars		2	3	2		2			
<i>Total</i>	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	1

Table 2. Comparison of the MNI between the ‘En Ḥakhlil and ‘En ‘Esur/Tel Esur Burial Caves

Cave	MNI	Reference
Tel Esur Cave 548	16	Nagar, forthcoming
Tel Esur Cave 561	16	
Tel Esur Cave 562	137	
Tel Esur Cave 567	45	
Barqai South	26	Nagar and Winocur 2016
‘En Esur	123	
‘En Esur Tomb 80	94	Nagar 2010

considerable variation in minimum numbers of individuals (MNI) among the burial caves at Tel Esur may reflect differences in the duration of use of each cave at a site. The results of this comparison (Table 2) show that the minimum number of individuals (MNI) at ‘En Ḥakhlil is relatively low, possibly indicating a short-term use of the cave for burial.

CONCLUSIONS

Cave 2 at ‘En Ḥakhlil yielded the remains of 19 buried individuals of varying ages that may have been interred at the site over a relatively short period. The burials possibly originated in the nearby Early Bronze Age settlement of Tel Shadud.

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