

## HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS FROM THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE BURIAL CAVE AT BEIT ŞAFAFA, JERUSALEM

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Human skeletal remains in a very poor state of preservation were found in a burial cave from the Middle Bronze Age II at Beit Şafafa, Jerusalem, in the course of salvage excavations (see Ben-Ari and Wiegmann, this volume). The bones were found scattered, making the reconstruction of the original posture of the interred impossible. Nonetheless, basic anthropological parameters, such as the minimum number of individuals (MNI) and age at death, were estimated. Due to external constraints, the remains were examined and reburied on site.

All the diagnostic bone fragments were described in detail in the archival report.<sup>1</sup> A summary of the anthropological results is provided below.

*Locus 102* (Group 1).— The finds included a fragment of the cranial vault, four teeth and few fragments of postcranial bones, representing at least one adult of undetermined sex. Based on epiphyseal closure stages (Johnston and Zimmer 1989) and the tooth attrition rate (following Hillson 1986:176–201) the age at death is estimated at 18–25 years.

*Locus 104* (Group 3).— The remains included a cranial vault fragment and few small non-diagnostic postcranial bone fragments. Although the age at death could not be estimated, it is possible, based on the bone proportions, to determine that these fragments do not represent an infant. Some animal bone fragments were also noticed.

*Locus 106* (Group 4).— A few cranial vault bone fragments, one tooth, a fragmentary clavicle, a rib and the distal parts of two humeri were found. Epiphyseal closure stages (Johnston and Zimmer 1989) indicate that at least two individuals, a child and an adult, are represented (Johnston and Zimmer 1989). Although the age of the child could not be estimated, it is possible to determine that the fragments do not represent an infant. The tooth places the age at death of the adult at 20–30 years (Hillson 1986:176–201) and measurement of the distal humerus (Bass 2005:153) identifies the individual as male.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthropological Report Beit Safafa 6898, IAA Archives.

*Locus 99* (disturbed part of cave).— The remains included a cranial vault and mandibular fragments, 17 teeth and postcranial bones. Two partially preserved lower jaws were found, representing a child, aged 3–5 years, and an adult, aged 40–50 years (Hillson 1986:176–201). The teeth, found scattered in the process of sifting, were sorted into types, and described for their development stages and attrition, to provide an estimated age at death. They represent at least five individuals, aged 7–9, 15–20, 25–40, >30 and >50 years (Hillson 1986:176–201).

The analysis of the skeletal remains from Beit Şafafa Cave I was based on observation on-site only. As the bones were found scattered throughout the cave, the results from each locus should be considered together with the other loci, as fragments of the same individual might be represented in more than one part of the cave. Therefore, an MNI of at least seven individuals, of them no less than two children (3–5, 7–9 years), an adolescent (15–20 years) and four adults (25–40, 40–50, >30, >50 years), can be assumed. One of the adults was identified as male, while the sex of the remainder could not be determined.

In the Western Galilee, an average of 11–26 individuals was recorded for the MB II burial caves (Getzov and Nagar 2002), and in a cave in Naħal Refa'im Jerusalem (Nagar 2017), 19 individuals were reported. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that the MNI in the present study, affected by the poor state of preservation of the specimens and the methodologies applied, must have also been in this range, which is to say, double the number reported above.

## REFERENCES

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