The Biblical Archaeologist is published quarterly (February, May, September, December) by the American Schools of Oriental Research. Its purpose is to meet the need for a readable, non-technical, yet thoroughly reliable account of archaeological discoveries as they relate to the Bible.

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Subscriptions: $3.00 per year, payable to the **American Schools of Oriental Research,** 126 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139. Associate members of *ASOR* receive the journal automatically. Ten or more subscriptions for group use, mailed and billed to the same address, $2.00 per year apiece. Subscriptions run for the calendar year. In England: twenty-four shillings (24s.) per year, payable to **B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., Broad Street, Oxford. Back numbers:** $1.00 per issue and $3.75 per volume, from the *ASOR* office. Please make remittance with order.

The journal is indexed in *Art Index, Index to Religious Periodical Literature,* and at the end of every fifth volume of the journal itself.

Second-class postage PAID at Cambridge, Massachusetts and additional offices.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, BY TRANSCRIPT PRINTING COMPANY PETERBOROUGH, N. H.

Contents

Secondary Burials in Palestine

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One of the most prevalent and yet least understood of ancient Palestinian burial customs is that of ossilegium, or secondary burial. Such a practice is characterized by the collection of skeletalized remains at some point after the flesh had wasted away and by their deposition in a new place of repose. This type of burial contrasts with the more familiar primary inhumation which transpires shortly after death and remains undisturbed.

By and large the frequency with which secondary burials appear in the long history of Palestinian tombs has been overlooked. Perhaps this oversight derives from the traditional view which held such a practice alien to the spirit of Semitic peoples, for whom disturbing the repose of the dead was thought to be so repugnant. Such an attitude is reflected in the biblical statement of Numbers 19:15: "Whoever in the open fields touches one who is slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days (RSV 19:16)." Thus it is striking to note the repeated occurrence of second burials which could only be effected by human transfer. This apparent contradiction no doubt explains why so many elaborate

theories have arisen to interpret this custom, which seemed to indicate a disrespectful treatment accorded to the dead. However, because of the scholarly focus on bone containers themselves, ossuary burials have often escaped such theorization.

Palestinian archaeologists have usually regarded secondary burial as callous and primitive despite the often elaborate tombs in which these burials are found. By way of explanation they relate them to nomadic peoples whose wanderings would have required two burials: at the time of death and then a later transfer to the family or tribal burial ground. Building on the researches of classical scholars, others have maintained that once the corpse was devoid of flesh it was no longer in need of care, the "soul" being no longer sentient.

This study will attempt to offer a new perspective which will allow for an understanding of all forms of secondary burials; the weaknesses in the above theories will hopefully become apparent. We shall also attempt to relate the practices of ossilegium to notions of afterlife in ancient Palestine. This is a somewhat hazardous task because of the absence of written documents in the earlier periods. However, the biblical evidence is extremely helpful in explaining a good deal of the material in somewhat later times and may well provide insights into the meaning of the earlier practices.

Secondary Burials from Earliest to Biblical Times

It is not impossible that the Neolithic plastered skulls of Jericho represent one of the earliest stages in the development of secondary burial practices. The choice of the skull as an object of veneration is quite understandable: the ancients must have already concluded that the intellectual powers of man resided in the head. In wanting to retain and preserve the skull, they hoped to keep nearby their ancestor's wisdom. This would indicate the existence of a belief in the intimate connection between the corpse with flesh and the corpse without flesh. Why else the preservation or treatment of skeletal remains?

In attempting to understand the Jericho skulls and other tomb materials from high antiquity we turn to the evidence from Çatal Hüyük, the largest Neolithic site in the Near East. This site covers the millennium from *ca.* 6500 to 5600 B.C. and provides some most startling discoveries. What is most impressive is the fact that secondary burials are entirely normative for that community.[1] Moreover, the marvelous wall paintings found in homes and in sacred shrines offer a fruitful avenue of interpretation since they portray various phases of a burial procedure which is quite obviously of singular importance to the community.

1. J. Mellaart, *Catal Hüyük* (1967), pp. 204ff. For more detailed reporting on the burials one may consult Mellaart's preliminary reports in *Anatolian Studies,* XII (1961), 41-65; XIII (1963), 43-102; XIV (1964), 39-119.

The techniques of ossilegium found at Çatal Hüyük are not unlike those attested in Palestine in various periods. Disarticulated burials were found beneath the floors and sleeping platforms, though care was taken to preserve the skeleton in its anatomical position. Such burials were also found in the so-called vulture shrines over a period of a century and a half. In House E IV, 2, three skulls were found in a shallow grave beneath the floor

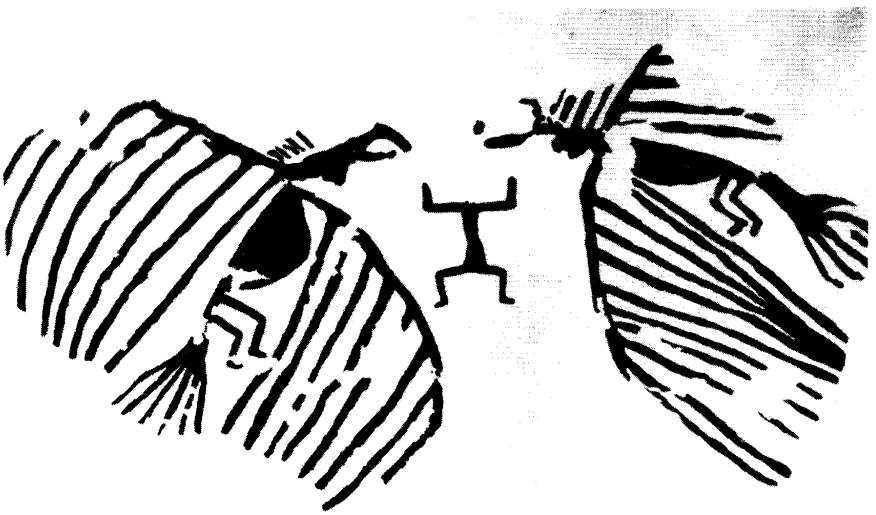

Fig. 2. Transcript of a wall painting from Catal Hüyük, Shrine VII, 21 (*ca.* 6200 B.C.). This is part of a great frieze showing six human beings undergoing excarnation by vultures. From Mellaart, *Anatolian Studies*, XIV (1964), Pl. XIIb.

and piles of disarticulated bones were found beneath the platforms. This suggests a strong sense of kinship with the dead such as is found at pre-pottery Jericho.

The presence of ochre-burials perhaps can be compared with the plastered skulls of Jericho. Aside from ochre being applied to the bare skull, as for example was the case in House E VI, 8, the bones of the trunk and arms were also coated. In some cases green and blue paint was applied. This type of procedure, however, proved to be the rare exception. Some of the skulls were preserved in cloth bags while other bone piles were preserved in their original parcels of cloth or skins.

The wall paintings from the two vulture shrines (Fig. 2) indicate that the dead bodies were taken away from the village where they were cleaned of their flesh in a process of excarnation carried out by birds of prey. Afterwards the bones were collected and reburied. Mellaart believes that this took place during a spring festival when funeral rites were held. Another painting in Shrine VI. B. 1 (Fig. 3), shows the objects familiar from the excavations under the sleeping platforms, namely human skulls with gaping

mouths and empty eye-sockets. The excavator conjectures that this painting represents metamorphosis for emergence from the grave. Also pictured are gabled houses which probably represent the house of excarnation.

Whatever conception of afterlife may lie behind such practices, we may emphasize the very real sense of continuity that was felt between the realm

Fig. 3. Polychrome wall painting from the north wall of a Catal Hüyük shrine. The upper register probably depicts a mortuary structure in which the dead were placed for excarnation, which is suggested by the skulls shown in the lower register. From Mellaart, *Anatolian Studies*, XIII (1963), Pl. XXVIb.

of the living and the realm of the dead. In requiring excarnation as a preliminary to final interment, the inhabitants of Çatal Hüyük preshadow the much later practice of the Persians and the Parsees who after excarnation preserved the bones of the dead in *astodans* or ossuaries. In being brought back to the houses of the living the deceased as it were continued to partake of the experiences of the living, while the living could enjoy the nearness of the dead.

In turning to Palestine, the evidence for secondary burials in the Chalcolithic period is considerable and is known usually because of the domiform ossuaries found in the coastal region in such places at Ḥederah, Benei Beraq, Givatayim, Azor, Ben Shemen, and Tel Aviv. While many of these ossuaries are house-shaped, others are in the shape of animals. Although the bones were collected into individual ossuaries, in several instances some bones were merely laid in bundles or were laid out in piles alongside the ossuaries. That these cases are contemporary demonstrates a relationship among

these several variations in the technique of ossilegium. Thus it is unlikely that those buried outside the actual ossuary were to share any lesser future than those buried inside the ossuaries.

Because no such individual ossuaries have been found in the south some scholars have believed that the custom of bone-gathering was restricted to the coastal plain. It is just as important to note, however, that secondary burials without ossuaries do occur as far south as Beersheba. This suggests that there is no real discontinuity between the northern and southern cultures as has often been thought. Most recently the possibility has been raised that the coastal cemeteries may well have served the so-called Negeb culture as well because of the presence of secondary burials in the south.

With the demise of Chalcolithic culture and the beginning of the Early Bronze age or Proto-Urban period, communal burials were established alongside the nomadic encampments which dotted Palestine at strategic locations. Not surprisingly many of the collective burials made in artificial caves are secondary. Tomb A 94 at Jericho is a case in point. Though all but the skulls were subsequently cremated, the bones in the tomb had been collected and brought to the communal burial place. It is intriguing to speculate that secondary burials were directly related to a semi-nomadic way of life, but the attestation of such a custom in settled periods as well shows the need for caution in such speculation.

One of the characteristics of these early secondary burials is the frequent absence of long bones. In Jericho tombs A 94 and K 2, they have been cremated or discarded to make room for careful preservation of the skulls.[2] At EB I Gezer jars not nearly large enough to hold all of the disarticulated bones were utilized for the secondary burial of human skeletalized remains.[3] These examples need not astonish, since the preservation of only part of a skeleton is a regular feature of secondary burials in Palestine. It is apparent that all the skeletal remains of a deceased person did not require preservation in order for future life to be achieved. When we take into account the nature of mythopoeic thought, which provides a very good framework for understanding the practices of high antiquity and where the differentiation between death and life was not accentuated, it is not strange at all to find only part of a body standing for all of a man.

The recent excavated cemetery at Bâb edh-Dhrâ' has brought to light further evidence for disarticulated burials in the period between the great nomadic intrusions. These burials provide one of the most exciting archaeological discoveries in recent years. Secondary burials are found in all but the final phase of the cemetery, which extends roughly from 3200-2200 B.C.

2. K. Kenyon, *Jericho* I (1960), 4, 22-25; cf. also her later views in *Jericho* II (1965), 3, 11, 550. For a general discussion of secondary burials in this period see D. Gilead, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, C (1968), 16-27.

3. R. A. S. Macalister, *Gezer I* (1912), p. 78.

The earliest or shaft burial phases of Bâb edh-Dhrâ' have close affinities to burials of the Proto-Urban period at Jericho. The picture of the neat little piles of skeletalized remains with the skulls separated from the long bones is most impressive (Fig. 4). One is no less impressed with the great care that was lavished on the tomb and with the quality of the tomb furnishings themselves. Collected remains were placed on a mat or platform rather than left on the floor. Several figurines have been found in some of the bone piles, an occurrence which makes the existence of a belief in a life beyond the grave all the more probable.[4]

Fig. 4. Undisturbed chamber of Tomb A 69 at Bâb edh-Dhrâ'. Note the basalt cup at left, the disarticulated bone pile on a mat in the center (skulls separated from long bones), and part of the tomb's pot group at the right. From Lapp, *Jerusalem Through the Ages*, Pl. I:2.

The charnel houses date to the third phase of the cemetery, which corresponds to EB II-III. These funerary buildings are rectangular mudbrick structures and contained huge quantities of disarticulated remains and pottery. Some of the pottery contained bones. Most likely the great cemetery served as a burial ground for the Cities of the Plain. It seems unlikely, however, that before transfer to the cemetery these groups of deceased were decarnated by boiling as the excavator suggests. Perhaps at this time excarnation was still practiced. This could account for the delicate bones of the skull being well preserved as they were at Çatal Hüyük. The fact that the

4. For the most recent discussions of this material see P. W. Lapp, *BASOR*, No. 189 (Feb. 1968), pp. 12-41; *Jerusalem Through the Ages* (1969), pp. 26-33.

biblical writers so strongly threaten excarnation by birds of prey and or beasts as a severe punishment for sin suggests that excarnation was still known in biblical times (Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33, 16:4, 19:7, 34:20; Ps. 79:2).

The final phase of the cemetery at Bâb edh-Dhrâ' is marked by the appearance of cairns and by the absence of secondary burials. The cairn burials are presently attributed to the post-urban phase or to the destroyers of the fortified town in the 23rd century.

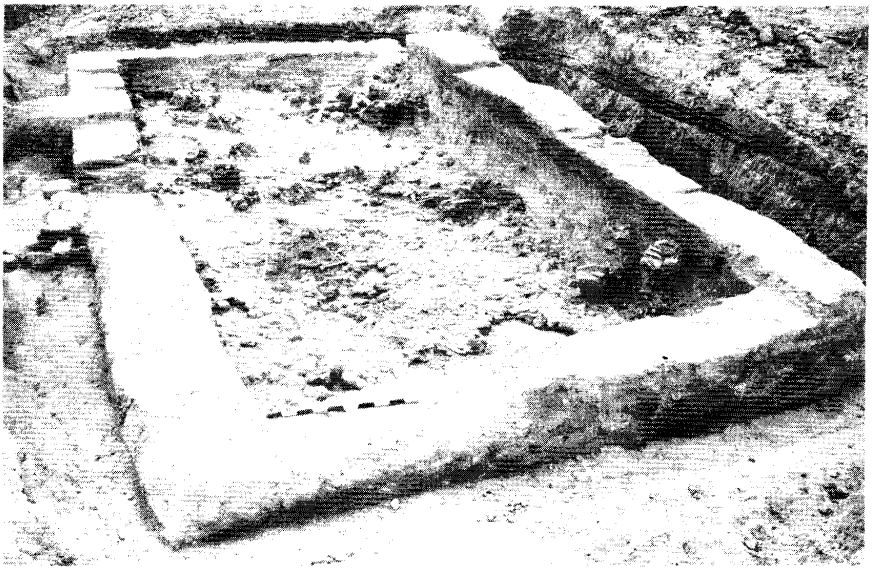

Fig. 5. One of the charnel houses from Bâb edh-Dhrâ'. Disarticulated bone piles and quantities of pottery appear on the cobbled floor. Photo by Paul W. Lapp.

The collective secondary burials of the Middle Bronze I period have long been recognized and interpreted as representing a semi-nomadic culture. Indeed at a first glance it seems quite compelling to explain such a phenomenon in terms of the tribal burial area associated with such a group. However, one of the weaknesses of this theory, which certainly does not apply to the Bâb edh-Dhrâ' material or to the settled culture of the Chalcolithic period, is that it cannot be applied to the Dagger Tombs or articulated burial groups at Jericho which are contemporary with the disarticullated groups of Jericho.

Secondary burials of varying sorts are now well attested in a variety of locations in MBI Palestine: 'Ain es-Sâmiyeh (Mirzbâneh), Jericho, Lachish, Megiddo, Tell el-'Ajjul, el-Jib, Khirbet Kûfîn, Hablet el-'Amûd, and most recently Tiberias and el-Fûl.[5] Through the excavations at el-Fûl (Jebel Qa-

5. For Tiberias see V. Tzaferis, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XVIII (1968), 15-19; for el-Fûl see provisionally W. G. Dever's Hebrew Union College Jerusalem School Newsletter of January, 1968. For further references consult P. W. Lapp, *Dhahr Mirzbâneh Tombs* (1966), pp. 40ff.

'aqir) reiterate what has long been known about such burial customs, they do provide some additional information (Fig. 6). Unusual features in a number of the tombs at this site are the body-recess, lamp niche, and panels with graffiti on them. The last of these suggests a rather vivid conception of afterlife and provides important new data. The beautifully preserved tombs probably were cut by professional grave diggers, and it is amazing to find a single disarticulated burial in such an elaborate setting.

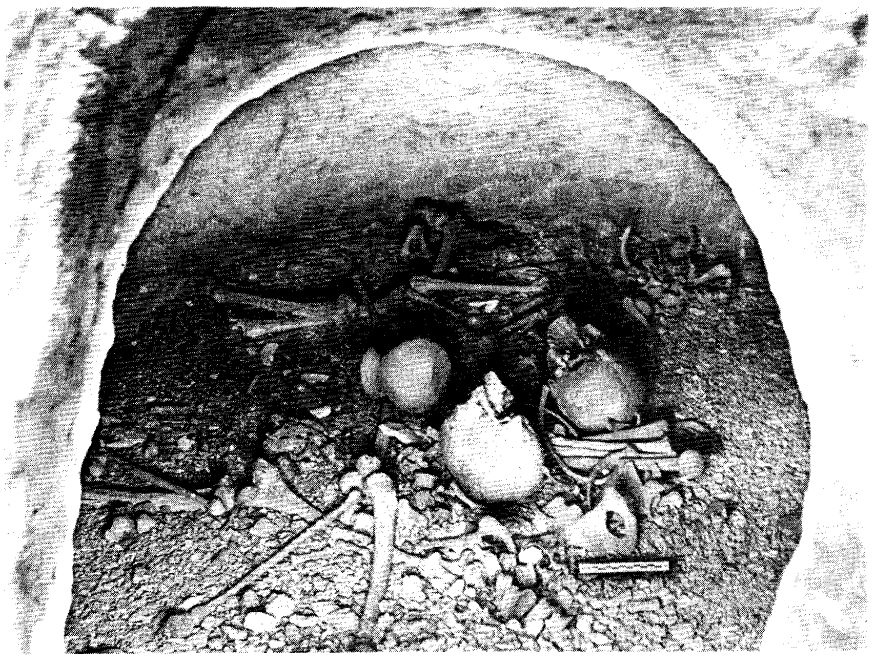

Fig. 6. Interior of a shaft tomb from cemetery B, Jebel Qa'aqir, *ca.* 2000 B.C. Note two disarticulated burials, part of a sheep or goat carcass (even the animal burial is secondary!), the single grave offering and small amphoriskos. Photo by T. A. Rosen, courtesy of William G. Dever.

At Mirzbâneh, too, the carefully hewn tomb chambers in most cases contained only the remains of a single adult. One of the curious characteristics of this cemetery is that no group of bones or particular bone such as the skull was required in the secondary deposition of the remains. Another common feature is that a layer of soft lime was built up under the bone piles. Some of the bone piles seem merely to have been dumped from a container to the floor. In Jericho Tomb J 21 one of these textile containers was partially preserved. In contrast to this is the example of secondary articulation of bones in Mirzbâneh Tomb B6 where the skull was laid topmost over a pair of femurs. This parallels very closely the later Jewish custom of laying

out neat little bone piles with the skull topmost. In still other tombs at Mirzbâneh a mat replaced the bedding of lime, a practice which is also attested in late Hellenistic bone chambers. Paul Lapp, the excavator of the Mirzbâneh tombs, notes that such practices continue among some local Arab groups even today. Similar customs have also been observed by P. Bar-Adon among contemporary Palestinian Beduin.[6]

Given the widespread provenance of secondary burials in this period and the existence of a native tradition of ossilegium, we find it difficult to accept the argument for the particular origins of Lapp's Intermediate Bronze age people on the basis of similar secondary burial customs elsewhere. Moreover it is really not surprising to find secondary burials also in the MB II period in Palestine. Several examples will suffice.

In the MB II cemetery at Munḥata in the upper Jordan Valley there are collective secondary pit burials in all the tombs. This is quite unlike the usual MB II B custom of reusing MB I shaft tombs. Most of the human skeletal remains are skulls with a disproportionately small number of long bones. The pottery was mostly whole or smashed *in situ*, indicating deposition at the time of collective secondary burial.[7] The closest parallel to the Munḥata material comes from Jericho Tomb A I where there are preserved eight or nine crania but only a small number of long bones. Perhaps slightly earlier than this tomb group are the MB II A tombs at Ras el-'Ain, where rectangular stone-lined pits are covered with slabs. In the walls of the tombs are recesses which evidently served as ossuaries.[8] These burials thus represent yet another type of tomb in which secondary inhumation occurs.

Secondary Burials from Biblical to Hellenistic Times

With such a lengthy tradition of bone gathering in Palestine it is not strange to find this practice continuing into the Iron age. Certain typological features of Iron age tombs have long been a puzzle to archaeologists and only recently have there been attempts to understand them in terms of the custom of ossilegium. L.Y. Rahmani of the Israel Department of Antiquities has greatly enhanced our understanding of a number of these features.[9] Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of Iron age tombs to be viewed in light of secondary burial practices is the communal ossuary or repository which was adopted to insure the safekeeping of the bones of former burials.

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6. E. Stern, ed., *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society, Reader A* (1965), pp. 70-71 (Hebrew).
7. See provisionally J. Perrot, *Syria*, XLIII (1966), 50, and the forthcoming article of A. Furshpan of the University of Connecticut to whom I am indebted for this information.
8. J. H. Illiffe, *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, V (1936), 113-126; J. Van Seters, *The Hyksos* (1966), pp. 45ff.
9. Notably in *Israel Exploration Journal*, VIII (1955), 101-105 and XVII (1967), 67-100.

Unlike secondary burials in the earlier periods, primary and secondary interments often occur in the same tomb chamber in the Iron age. When a corpse became decarnate the bones were simply swept into the communal ossuary or removed to a repository. Also, Jewish law enjoined a speedy burial, usually on the day of death. It is virtually impossible, however, to determine the place of initial burial even when the tomb is undisturbed. The deceased who died far away from the family tomb had to have a temporary tomb at the location of death until decomposition was complete. Only then were his bones gathered and transported to the family tomb. One of the most interesting examples of such a case is found in the story of the reburial by David of the bones of Saul (and his sons) and of Jonathan (II Sam. 21:13; cf. I Chron. 10:12 and another source in I Sam. 31:11-13) and the vigil of Rizpeh over their remains. The II Samuel account is the only case in the Bible where the period of decomposition is noted. From 22:10ff. It may be deduced that this period took approximately eight months, from May until December, after which the bones of Saul and Jonathan were interred in the family tomb of Kish in Benjamin. The excarnation motif, so prominent in a positive way at Çatal Hüyük, also clearly underlies the statement in Jeremiah 7:33. "And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the beasts of the earth; and none will frighten them away." Without someone like Rizpeh to ward off the flesh-eating birds and animals it would become virtually impossible to effect a proper secondary burial by Israelite standards.

The non-Palestinian tomb group of Hadhramaut in southwest Arabia has typological affinities to numerous Palestinian tombs and also to the Transjordanian cemeteries of Sahab B and 'Amman. We discuss this tomb group out of chronological sequence since it offers strong albeit indirect evidence that many Iron age tombs contain secondary burials, the bones of which had been brought from afar.

Tomb A5 at Hadhramaut is a single chamber, horseshoe in shape, with a solitary bench cut into the eastern side. The entrance fill and interior deposits were undisturbed at the time of excavation. The skeletal remains were incomplete yet neatly piled up with the crania lying on their bases separated from their skeletons. The burials were apparently brought in at intervals in their disarticulated states. Tomb A6, although disturbed, presents some noteworthy features which may shed some light on similar Palestinian tombs. The characteristic feature here is the recess, six of which are cut into the northern and western arcs of the horseshoe-shaped chamber. The presence of disarticulated bone piles again leads to the conclusion that this chamber was intended for secondary burials only and that the recesses were used as bone depositories as they were, for example, in Gezer Tombs 58 and 59. Though

these tombs date to the late Iron age, they at least raise the possibility that many Palestinian tomb features represent the second burials of those who died elsewhere rather than of those whose first and second burials were in the same tomb.[10]

In turning to the Palestinian evidence from the Iron age we may observe a number of tomb features which become fairly standard by Iron II and continue into the later periods. The rectangular tombs of the Sea Peoples (900 Cemetery) and of the Philistines (500 Cemetery) at Tell Fara'

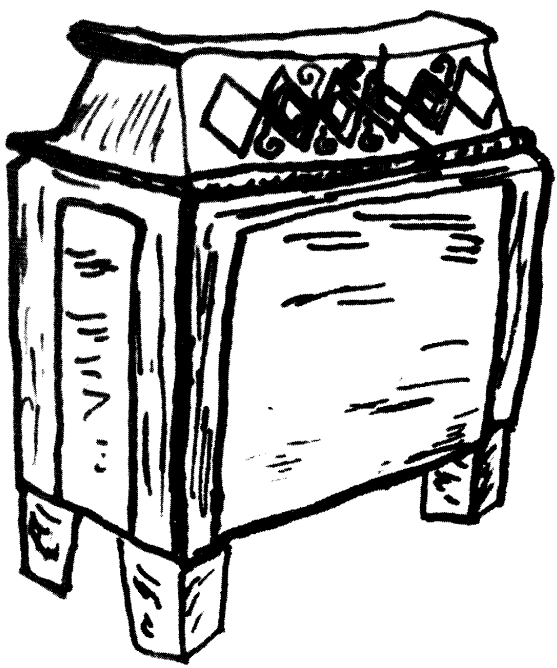

Fig. 7. Terra-cotta Mycenean larnax from Crete, definitely used as a bone chest, and in the shape of an ordinary dwelling. After Tsountas and Manatt, The *Mycenaean Age*. p. 137, Fig. 51.

(south) exhibits several of these features, namely, the bone chamber, the pit repository, and the central depression;[11] these are best understood in the context of secondary burials. Aside from their rectangularity, only recently observed as being influenced by the Aegean world, these features are also associated with secondary burials in Aegean tomb groups. This coincidence raises the question of the circumstances of their introduction into Palestine.

10. G. Caton-Thompson, *The Tombs and Moon Temple of Hureidha (Hadhramaut)* (1944), pp. 81ff., 90ff.

11. W. M. F. Petrie, *Beth Pelet* I (1930), Pls. XVIII-XIX; cf. J. Waldbaum, *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXX (1966), 331-340.

The elaborate LB II tomb at Ras Shamra ascribed to the wealthy Aegean element of the population may well provide a clue in what appears to be a cultural borrowing at Tell Fara'.[12] That at Ugarit there are secondary burials into a family tomb is not to be dismissed too lightly since economics did not dictate the propensity for bone gathering. In Mycenean tombs similar to the Ras Shamra ones, numerous larnakes (Fig. 7) or bone chests have been found.[13] Only recently some larnakes have been excavated at Arkhanes in Crete in which only the skulls were reburied.[14] In some instances larnakes occur alongside the simpler type of secondary burial into bone piles, offering a parallel which supports our interpretation of the Chalcolithic materials where both simple secondary burials and secondary burials into house-urns were attested side by side.

The 900 Cemetery at Tell Fara' contained no Philistine pottery but included wares very close to those in the 500 Cemetery dated to the end of LB II. Tomb 934, the largest of this complex, gives some evidence that its central depression was used as a sort of communal ossuary. Off the central depression what appear to be two repositories are cut into the side. Though the rest of the tomb group shows no clear indication of secondary burial but only the moving aside of earlier interments, it is quite easy to understand how separate compartments, a characteristic feature of this tomb group, came to be used in secondary burials. Tomb 542 of the 500 Cemetery in fact has a compartment that is later used as a bone chamber.

Still more evidence for the custom of bone collecting comes from the 200 Cemetery at Tell Fara', which also dates to Iron I and is attributed to the influence of the Sea Peoples. The type of grave here is the cist grave of the much earlier type known from the micro-dolmenic cist cemetery of Ghassul. In Tomb 201, the largest of this group, 126 skeletons were recovered; in Tomb 239 twenty-six skulls were uncovered. These burials then are best understood as secondary. Also at Tell Zeror secondary burials into cist graves are found where it appears that other Sea Peoples (possibly Tjekker warriors) were buried.[15]

In short, it is a distinct possibility that many of the innovative features associated with secondary burials in Iron age Palestine may well be derived from Aegean prototypes already known in the Levant by LB II-Iron I. The strong Israelite attachment to the family tomb and the well-established custom of secondary burial doubtlessly facilitated the process by which such architectural features were adapted; the bone gathering practices of the Aegean peoples could only have reinforced the corresponding Israelite customs.

12. See C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica I* (1939), pp. 77ff., 90ff. and Figs. 60-71.
13. See A. J. B. Wace, *Archaeologia*, LXXXII (1932), 1-146, and E. Vermeule, *Journal of Hellenic* Studies, LXXXV (1965), 123-148.
14. A. Sakellarakis, *Archaeology*, XX (1967), 276-281.
15. K. Ohata, ed., *Tel Zeror II* (1967), pp. 35-41.

There are a number of other tombs which also seem best understood in terms of the tradition of ossilegium. Tomb 58 at Gezer (Fig. 8) offers convincing proof that Iron age recesses were used for storing collected remains. The sunken rectangular recesses most closely resemble those in Tomb A6 at Hadhramaut. Tomb 58 is a single-chambered bench tomb dated to Iron I. Macalister correctly identifies the circular cells as ossuaries for bone piles. Moreover, both tombs contained Philistine ware. Tomb 59 was probably used for secondary interments. Many human bones were collected into vessels, some into large sherds, small jugs, bowls, and flat saucers. This is precisely the type of veneration for human remains one would expect in a secondary burial.

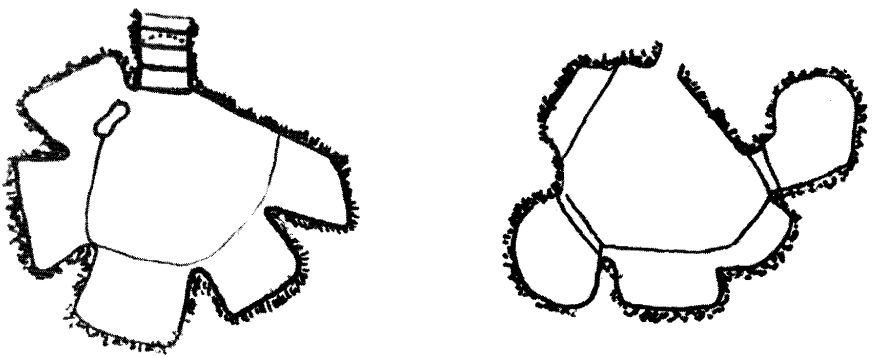

Fig. 8. Gezer tombs. After Macalister, *Gezer* III, Pl. LVI.

Tomb 96 from Gezer dates somewhat later, to *ca.* 975 B.C., and is typologically closer to Tomb 58. Unlike the benches in Tomb 58 and 59, which were roughly rectangular, the benches in Tomb 96 follow the natural contours of the chamber. At the south end are two small recesses below the floor level. They were probably intended to be used as ossuaries, for they contained over 200 burials. This type of recess may well be the typological link between the earlier material and the later 10th century repository.[16]

Tomb 54 at Tell en-Nasbeh with its discoid recess at the east end is also probably related to these innovative features. Though disturbed, fifty-four jawbones were discovered, strongly suggesting that this recess also may have been used as an ossuary for human remains. Similarly, Tomb 5 gives some indication of being used for secondary burials. The ledges apparently were used for the primary burials and the chamber at the rear for collection

16. For all this material see *Gezer I*, pp. 321-325; 336-337.

of skeletal remains.[17] This arrangement, which is highly reminiscent of the Aegean tomb models at Mycene and Tell Fara', foreshadows the later Palestinian bone chamber.

The more standard Iron II repositories such as are found in Tombs 120, 218, 219, and 223 at Lachish or in Beth Shemesh Tombs 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 clearly were designed to provide a compartment for storing earlier burials, though it is difficult to ascertain with certainty the place of primary burial. As more and more family members came to be interred with their fathers, their remains were gathered into the communal ossuary. The pushing aside of former burials indicates that primary burial did occur in the same tomb but it need not be interpreted as harsh treatment of the dead, as has often been suggested, since the emphasis is on joining one's fathers in the very same grave.

The Relation of Secondary Burials to Israelite Conceptions of Man and of Sheol

Viewed against the background of secondary burials in Palestine, the biblical idiom "to be gathered (*n'sp*) to one's fathers" takes on new meaning. In this expression may be discerned the echoes of a time when secondary burial was practiced in pastoral Palestine. Surely this is one of the most striking of all idioms for death in the Bible: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Go up into this mountain of Ab'arim, and see that land which I have given to the people of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was gathered' " (Num. 27:12-13). Of all the patriarchs only Moses and Aaron are buried outside of Palestine, but it may be assumed that neither was denied entry into Sheol. Moses' denial of entry into the promised land is taken by P to be the result of his own sin of pride (Num. 20: 10-14), while the Deuteronomic account explains this punishment as a consequence of the sinfulness of the people (Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Whatever the reason for not reaching Palestine, it may be stressed that the punishment was not to be carried over in death. Moses and Aaron are gathered to their poeple in a larger sense and the justification for using the "gathered" idiom with reference to them is thus telling.

Because of ancient Israel's hesitancy about physical contact with the defiling dead, her preoccupation with ossilegium must necessarily reflects a distinct theology of afterlife which made care of the bones take precedence over the reluctance for touching them. The Israelite view of the individual as *nephesh* must constitute the basis for such a theology. According to that view man is seen as a solitary unit even in death, when the bones of a man possess at least a shadow of their strength in life. The body in the Israelite conception is merely the soul in its outward form while the bones of a dead

17. W. F. Badé, *Some Tombs of Tell en-Nashbeh Discovered in 1929* (1931), pp. 18-33; C. C. McCown, *Tell en-Nasbeh I: Archaeological and Historical Results* (1947), pp. 82ff.

man represent a manifestation of that soul in a weakened state. After all, the dead still mutter as shades (Isa. 8:19; 29:4) and feel the worms gnawing at them (Job 14:22; Isa. 66:24). Hence the soul retains a very intimate connection with whatever may constitute the physical remains of the dead. Even in death, the unitary quality of the individual is not destroyed. The suggestion that the bones once devoid of their flesh are no longer in need of care, therefore, must be rejected. Death merely indicated a diminution rather than a cessation of the power to exist.

Such a unitary conception of the individual and a preoccupation with the remains of men only reinforces our understanding of the thought patterns of the ancients. One of the most peculiar aspects of ancient thought is the notion that a part can stand for a whole, *pars pro toto*.[18] It is precisely this notion which gave rise to the proverbial expression: "The memory of the righteous is a blessing" (Proverbs 10:7), the most common of all Jewish epitaphs. Indeed, the force of a name in ancient society was very great. There is a coalescence between the symbol and what it stands for. Hence, the most important thing of all was that the names of the dead be recalled by the living. Even today when memorial services for the dead are held in synagogues, the names of the dead are read aloud emphasizing their continued presence among the living. The same applies to the bones of the dead. However incomplete they may be, they represent the full significance of that man and it is hard to imagine the callous treatment in a family tomb of the beloved departed whose names were in a very real sense a potent force in the present. Ossilegium thus harmonizes with the attitudes of the ancients toward death, which did not mark in a strict sense an end to life. The practice of secondary burial, therefore, supports the Israelite conception of the totality of the individual.

There are numerous biblical passages which suggest the potential that man's bones possessed in death. Most notable perhaps is the resurrection of an unnamed man who comes in contact with the bones of Elisha (II Kings 13:21) or Ezekiel's vision of the resuscitation of the dry bones (Ezek. 37). If we cannot take Ezekiel's vision literally we can at least appreciate it either as an eschatological poetic vision of the realization of the potential which the bones of Israel possessed in Sheol or as a dramatic presentation of the return of exiled Israel to the Holy Land such as Moses and Aaron were promised when they were denied burial there. Perhaps we may now speculate that the bones of Saul and Jonathan were in fact buried in a communal ossuary.

In addition to this, the very idea that the deceased could interfere in the course of events of the living (I Samuel 28) is proof of a rather lively

18. H. Frankfort *et al, Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (1961), p. 21.

conception of Sheol. The biblical phrase "to be gathered to one's fathers" thus means to die and to descend to Sheol where the family of all Israel was assembled. The idiom may also reflect rather literally the MB I tombs discussed above. It would elucidate Abraham's preoccupation with proper burial; and it would explain the Iron Age innovation of the communal ossuary, the actual means by which one was joined to the common soul of his ancestors. In death and reburial the deceased gained a sort of corporate existence. No doubt the prevalence of subterranean tomb chambers also reflects the Israelite view of Sheol, often described as a nether world located beneath the earth (Num. 16:20), or in the cosmic waters (Job. 26:7), or under the "roots of mountains" (Jonah 2:6), or more frequently as "pit" (Pss. 16:10, 30:10). These images and metaphors are adapted from ancient Canaanite and Mesopotamian mythology, and there is no reason to doubt that the Israelites drew from this language of mythology. For it was in the language of myth that Israel came to understand the full meaning of history which had been oversimplified by some of the historical writers.

The biblical conceptions of man and of Sheol thus do not conflict with Israelite burial customs. Though the equally important practice of single inhumation existed alongside secondary inhumation, there is no reason to believe it presupposed any different theological framework. In Israel where there is some cause to question such activity as would be involved in a second burial, namely corpse defilement and opening a tomb, it is all the more significant to find such correspondence between customs and views of man and afterlife. It may be that the Levitical laws which relate to treatment of the dead indeed may constitute an attempt to combat a cult of the dead. After all, of all the nations of the ancient world Israel alone emphasized the defiling nature of the dead.

Secondary Burials in Hellenistic and Roman Times

Just as earlier discussions of the Chalcolithic tomb materials focused on the phenomenon of ossuaries, so too have most of the discussions of Jewish tombs in the Roman period centered about the problem of Jewish ossuaries. Indeed, the most expert commentators have remarked: "It is not clear from whom the Jews took this strange custom, which is indeed alien to the spirit of the Semitic peoples to whom disturbing the deceased was prohibited;" or "no proper interpretation has been given on the religious-historical plane of this burial-custom which is alien to the Jewish tradition."[19] It is our belief that it is precisely the failure to note the continuity in the custom of bone gathering in Palestine that has occasioned such views.

19. M. Avigad, *Sepher Yerushalayim* (1956), p. 321 (Hebrew); P. Kahane, *Israel Exploration Journal*, II (1952), 127, n.2.

During the Second Temple period the diversity in the kinds of secondary burials which characterized earlier periods persists. It therefore becomes increasingly difficult to single out the Jewish ossuary (Fig. 1) as something which signals a change in belief and we are accordingly skeptical of those attempts at relating a given variant of ossilegium to a specific socio-economic stratum or to a particular religious sect.[20] Since the evidence for the later period is so considerable, we can only highlight it and allude to the new theological implications which become attached to this ancient and venerated practice.

It is significant to note the presence of secondary burials without ossuaries in *Kokhim* or loculi in the Hellenistic-Roman tombs of Marissa and Beit Jibrin. These tombs represent the earliest of this sort in Palestine. It is of crucial importance to find such attestation in that the innovation of the loculus grave itself may be a result of foreign influence. So determined were the owners of these tombs to utilize the *kokhim* for collected remains that very often the walls between loculi were taken down so that the area could be used as a sort of bone chamber.[21] Secondary burials into smaller *kokhim* and niches are attested in the Roman tombs here as well.

The adoption of the loculus grave pattern thus seems only to have reinforced a native propensity to gather and preserve skeletal remains. Though this peculiar tomb arrangement may have come to Palestine via Egypt, where Hebrew and Greek names are found in such tombs as early as the 3rd century, it seems more probable that this pattern was ultimately borrowed from the Greeks.[22] Both the Jews and the Phoenicians by the end of the 3rd century B.C. in Egypt and Syro-Palestine employed this pattern. Since the Phoenicians were inhumators and the Jews practiced both primary and secondary inhumation, it is apparent once again that a typological feature has been adapted to the peculiar customs of a given people; and its adoption is ample testimony to Jewish borrowing in the Hellenistic period.

Separate bone chambers or charnel houses, similar to the Iron age bone chambers of Tell Fara' and Tell en-Nasbeh, turn up with increasing frequency in the late Hellenistic period. By far the most impressive of these is Jason's Tomb, which is dated to the Hasmonean period and is one of the most elaborate tombs of that period. Room A, a smoothly-hewn rectangular chamber with ten *kokhim*, evidently served as the place of primary interment until decomposition. Room B was the charnel house, since numerous piles of skeletalized remains numbering twenty-five burials were found along

20. L. Y. Rahmani, *'Atigot*, III (1961), 93-120; M. Avi-Yonah, *Oriental Art in Roman Palestine* (1961), pp. 25-27.

21. E. Oren, *Archaeology*, XVIII (1965), 218-224.

22. So I. Noshy, *The Arts in Ptolemaic Egypt* (1937), pp. 19-20; cf. N. P. Toll, *The Excavations at Dura-Europas, A Preliminary Report of the Ninth Season of Work, 1935-36, Part II: The Necropolis* (1946), p. 7, who argues for a Syro-Phoenician origin.

the wall of the chamber. Proof of transfer was established when pottery fragments from Chamber B were matched with pottery fragments from the *kokhim*.[23]

Several generations, the earliest of which dates to the time of Alexander Janneus, are represented here. The manner of transfer, alluded to in the tannaitic tractate *On Mourning* (*Semahot* 12.8), was by means of a sheet or mat. From a somewhat later period comes a reed bag, preserved in the

Fig. 9. Basket with skulls from Locus 2, Bar-Kokhba cave. From Yadin, *Finds from the Bar-Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters*, Pl. 6.

Bar-Kokhba caves (Fig. 9), which was used to collect or transfer the bones of the dead.[24] The similarity of these examples with the practice of earlier periods is obvious and striking.

An important parallel to Jason's Tomb comes from the southern chamber of a tomb in the Romema Quarter of Jerusalem (Fig. 10). It consists of two adjoining rectangular chambers. The one for primary burial contained two *kokhim*. The bone chamber had three small niches or *kokhim* for the collection of skeletal remains while the floor chamber was covered with a layer of earth on which bone piles were laid out on mats. In a later period

23. Rahmani, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XVII (1967), 61ff.
24. Y. Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar-Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters* (1963), pp. 30-31, Pls. 6-7.

the bone chamber came to be used as a depository for ossuaries which became much more frequent by the Herodian period.[25]

Another feature of Iron age tombs which continues into later periods is the communal ossuary or central depression in the rectangular bench tomb.

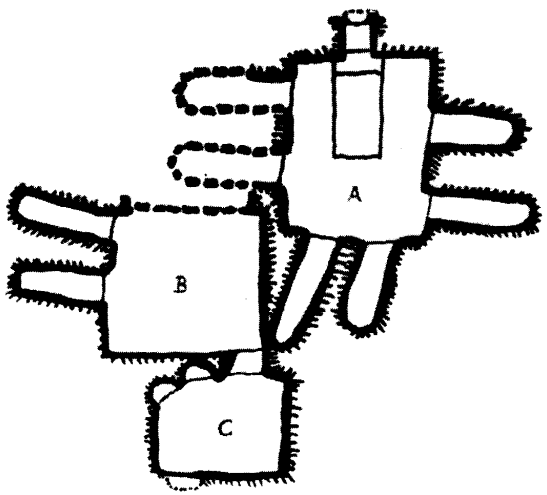

Fig. 10. Tomb from the Romema Quarter, Jerusalem. Room A, disturbed northern chamber; Room B, southern chamber for primary interments; Room C, bone chamber with small niches for ossuaries. After Rahmani, *Eretz Israel*, VIII, 186, Fig. 1.

It now is certain that such a cavity was not purely functional, viz., to facilitate the burial process made difficult by the limited height of the chamber, as some have argued. Corroboration of this comes from a late Hellenistic tomb at Ramat Raḥel.[26] In burial hall A there was a central depression and five *kokhim*. The *kokhim* with ossuaries belong to the Herodian phase while the secondary burials in the depression belong to the earlier phase. In the depression three skulls were found separated from the rest of the bones, which were carefully arranged into neat little piles. Once again a much earlier practice occurs in a later context. The emphasis on the importance of skulls is not at all surprising and is now well-documented in the later periods. Such skulls are reburied, for example, in some Jewish ossuaries from Jericho in Tomb K23.

A tomb at Wadi Yaṣul, Jerusalem, is extremely interesting because it shows secondary burials occurring both in *kokhim* and in the central depression without any trace of ossuaries.[27] The pottery is inconclusive and it is

25. Rahmani, *Eretz Israel*, VIII (1967), 186-192 (Hebrew). A summary of the finds in this tomb appeared earlier in *Israel Exploration Journal*, XIII (1963), 145.

26. M. Stekelis, *Journal of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society*, III (1934-35), 25ff. (Hebrew).

27. Avigad, *Eretz* Israel, VIII (1967), 133-135 (Hebrew).

impossible to tell which of the two variants of the custom is earlier or whether indeed they are contemporary. The important factor to be observed here is that two different typological features are being employed in the custom of ossilegium.

Another tomb from Jerusalem, called the Maḥanayim tomb, suggests that in many instances the communal assembling of bones predated the ap-

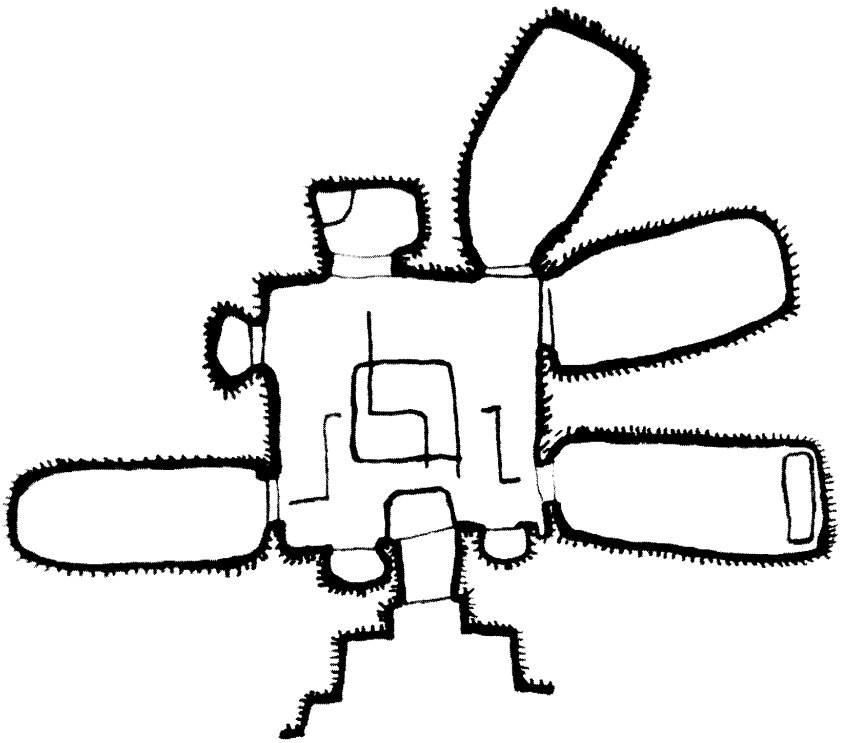

Fig. 11. Rectangular bench tomb from Reḥov Nisan-Beq in Jerusalem. After Rahmani, *'Antiqot*, III, 109, Fig. 8.

pearance of individual ossuaries. In chamber no. III, the introduction of ossuaries on the farthest bench caused the remains of earlier burials to be pushed aside.[28] A similar situation obtains in the Jerusalem tomb on Reḥov Ruppin. This tomb is a rectangular chamber with seven *kokhim* and a central depression. Only *kokh* no. 1 was found undisturbed with its sealing slab still intact. Within the loculus the remains of three individuals were found inside a single ossuary which was situated in front of a heap of disarticulated bones in the corner. Here is an excellent example of the loculus being used for a simple secondary burial and also for a secondary burial into

28. Rahmani, *'Atiqot*, III (1961), 105-107.

an ossuary. It is quite possible that in this particular instance the introduction of the individual container replaced older techniques of secondary burial though the tomb features themselves were utilized in both cases.

In yet another Jerusalem tomb from the late Hellenistic period on Rehov Nisan-Beq (Fig. 11), the older Iron age pattern of a rectangular bench tomb with central depression occurs together with four long *kokhim* and four smaller ones. The latter perhaps may be called repositories and might well descend from Iron age prototypes. The smaller ones could serve either for the collection of bones or for the deposition of a single ossuary. In *kokh* no. 2, one of the larger ones, a pit as wide as the loculus itself was cut at the rear and was used as a repository for human remains.[29] It is quite clear that the owners of such a tomb went to considerable length to insure the proximity of the mortal remains of their family; and it is in such a light that we have viewed similar Iron age tomb features.

It has been observed that secondary burials into *kokhim* without ossuaries occur at the time of the adoption of the loculus pattern. This practice continues throughout the Hellenistic-Roman period and is also found at Beth She'arim, which is our latest major site for the study of Jewish tombs in ancient Palestine. This accords well with the view derived mainly from linguistic evidence that the term *kokh* itself, an eastern Semitic loanword into western Aramaic, is regularly associated with secondary burials.[30] We need not be impressed by those who are hesitant to accept ossuaries as a Jewish phenomenon because of the Greek term *glossokomon*, which incidentally is not attested until a period after the adoption of the convention of the individual bone container. Jews did not lack a Semitic vocabulary appropriate to secondary burials.

Even at Qumran, where the vast majority of graves thus far excavated have been primary inhumations in shaft graves with a recess at the bottom, there are several examples of secondary inhumation. In a period when the loculus pattern was in wide usage, it is not strange to find the sectarian covenanters employing a different burial pattern to emphasize their separateness. For a community to which ritual purity meant so much, however, the occurrence of even a few secondary interments is all the more noteworthy.[31] It is quite possible that these burials belong to those Essenes who lived away from the settlement by the Dead sea and who desired to be gathered to their true brethren at Qumran in death.

Consideration of the great necropolis of Beth She'arim (Sheikh Ibreiq) is an appropriate way to end this brief survey. A careful reading of all the

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.
30. Y. Kutscher, *Eretz Israel*, VIII (1968), 279 (Hebrew).
31. R. de Vaux, *L'archéologie et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte* (1961), pp. 37f.

Fig. 12. Room VII of catacomb I at Beth She'arim: arcosolia, kokhim, and pit graves. From Mazar, *Beth She'arim* I, Pl. XVI.

excavation reports will reveal that secondary burial was in fact the dominant mode of inhumation there.[32] Catacomb no. 1 offers by far the most variegated picture of burial customs with arcosolia, *kokhim*, and pits all in simultaneous use (Fig. 12). The arcosolium, the most frequent type of burial in catacomb nos. 1-4, was used for both primary and secondary inhumation and even for the deposition of ossuaries.

The *kokhim* at Beth She'arim are smaller than the longer Hellenistic ones, ranging from approximately two to four feet in length. Again many were used as repositories into which bones were collected and in many instances more than several individuals were interred. Whole chambers were also used to store collected bones (room 2 of catacomb no. 1) or to store ossuaries or coffins. The inscriptions, moreover, leave no doubt that the necropolis served as a center for reburial of Jews from all over the Diaspora.

One of the inscriptions bears directly on the problem of the use of the sarcophagus as ossuary. It is inscribed on sarcophagus no. 11 of catacomb 20 and reads: "This is the sarcophagus of the three sons of Rabbi . . ."[33] This confirms the view that coffins were indeed used for the collection of bones as it is impossible to assume that all three bodies were interred intact in one coffin. A wooden coffin, dated to late Hasmonean times, found in burial cave 4 of the Naḥal David in the Judean desert (Fig. 13), also seems to have been used as an ossuary, for it contained seven skulls.[34]

Given our broad understanding of secondary burials it is now apparent why we cannot accept the overemphasis on the individual ossuary which represents only a single variant of the custom of ossilegium. The very fact that ossuaries have turned up in the Diaspora at Alexandria and Carthage and in Spain in the late Roman period gives some indication of how important this mode of inhumation was.[35] Though individual ossuaries diminish in number in Palestine after A.D. 70, the attestation of diverse secondary burials and individual receptacles in various parts of Palestine in addition to Beth She'arim gives further reason to use caution in restricting so distinctive a burial custom to a short period. In the view of most scholars ossuaries appear *ca.* 40 B.C. and disappear after A.D. 70. Indeed, it would be most strange to find any burial custom as striking as this limited to so short a time span. Once we have a view which allows us to consider all variants of secondary burial on the same continuum, the necessity for determining precise dates for ossuaries is substantially reduced. To be concerned about whether the first Jewish ossuaries date to 100 or 50 B.C. is to miss the point.

32. B. Mazar, *Beth She'arim, Report on the Excavations during 1936-40, I: The Catacombs I-IV* (1957), p. viii of the English summary.
33. Avigad, *Israel Exploration Journal*, VII (1957), 241ff.
34. *Israel Exploration Journal*, XII (1962), 181ff.
35. For Jewish ossuaries in Alexandria see E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (1953-69), Vol. I, 115; Vol. II, 63; and Vol. II, Fig. 113; for Carthage see J. Ferron, *Cahiers de Byrsa* (1956), pp. 105-17; and for Spain see H. Beinart, *Eretz Israel*, VIII (1967), 298-305 (Hebrew).

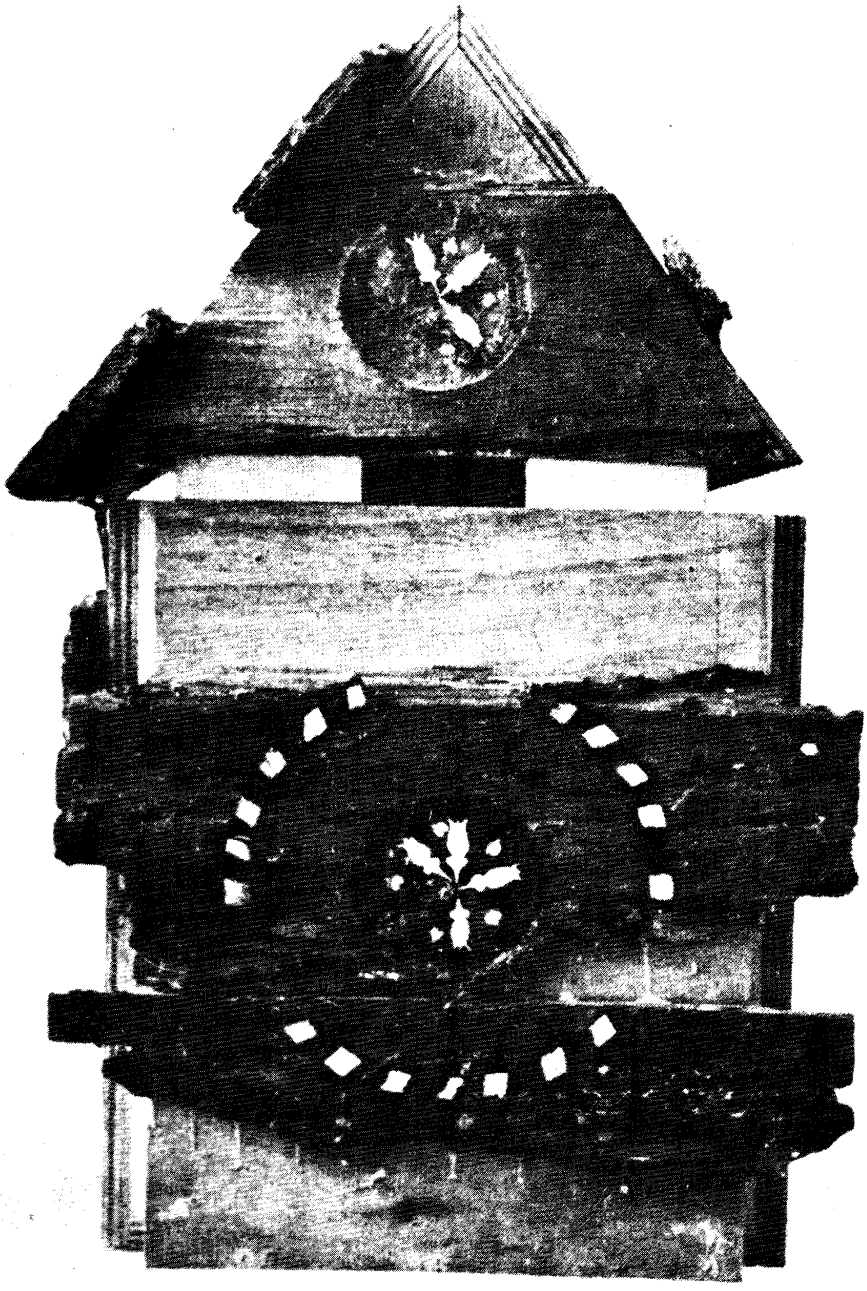

Fig. 13. Wooden coffin from Nahal David in The Judean desert. Note the gabled lid and its resemblance to that of the ossuary in Fig. 1. This wooden example may be the prototype of limestone ossuaries. From Avigad, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XII (1962), Pl. 22A.

Theology of Jewish Ossilegium

As we move on to consider the theological ramifications of this custom in Jewish sources it needs to be stressed that the sources do not differentiate between burial in an ossuary and any other type of secondary burial.

> The ossilegium of two corpses may take place at the same time, as long as the bones of the one are put at one end of a sheet and those of the other at the other end of the sheet. So Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri.
>
> Rabbi 'Akiba says: In the course of time, the sheet will waste away; in the course of time, the bones will intermingle. Let them rather be gathered and placed in ossuaries. (*Semahot* 12.8.)[36]

In the first half of this mishnah we can imagine the deposition of skeletalized remains in a variety of ways, while in the second half the convention of the individual ossuary is required. Though there is a disagreement here on the manner of second burial, both techniques of ossilegium are acknowledged. In the former instance we can also imagine the disarray that would occur in effecting a transfer by means of some sort of bag.

The custom of secondary burial carries many theological implications in addition to those in the biblical writings which have already been indicated. Of signal importance is the persistence of the conception of man as a unitary individual whose mortal remains constitute the very essence of that person in death. It is no wonder that men desired to be buried or reburied with their fathers. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when burial in Palestine took on new and added meaning that would cause Jews in the Diaspora to desire burial in the Holy Land. However, it is clear that from the turn of the common era until the 4th century A.D. Diaspora, Jews buried the remains of their dead in Palestine. This fact is established by an examination of the ossuary inscriptions from Jerusalem and the sepulchral inscriptions from Beth She'arim.

It was not long before the rabbis understood final interment on holy soil as having special atoning values; they took Deuteronomy 32:43 as the proof-text for this notion.[37] Such a conception met with a good deal of hostility amongst those who lived their lives in Palestine and saw their brethren return to Eretz Israel in death. Still another interpretation was given by the rabbis on the benefits which accrued to an individual after burial in Palestine: "The dead of Eretz Israel will be the first to be resurrected in the days of the Messiah."[38]

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36. The translation is that of D. Zlotnick, *The Tractate Mourning* (1966).
37. See in the Babylonian Talmud, *Kethuboth* 111a and *Berakoth* 18b; in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Kethuboth* 12.3 = *Kilaim* 9.3.
38. *Genesis Rabbah* 96.5.

It was the positive value given to the period of decomposition, however, which best explains why secondary burial was so important in the later period. Both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds are most explicit regarding decay of the flesh as necessary to the forgiveness of criminals:

> Both death and [shameful] burial [i.e., in the criminal's graveyard] are necessary [for forgiveness]. R. Adda b. Ahabah objected: They observe no mourning rites, but grieved for him, for grief is borne only in the heart. But should you think that having been [shamefully] buried, he attains forgiveness, they should observe mourning rites: The decay of the flesh too is necessary [for forgiveness].[39]

In time this view, coupled with the view of the special effects of burial in Palestine, came to provide the conceptual framework for all secondary burials in rabbinic times and was no longer confined to criminals alone.

Closely related to these ideas is the concept of *damnatio memoriae.* The parade example in rabbinic literature is the notice of the exhumation and dragging of the bones of king Ahaz by his son Hezekiah in order to cancel the evil decrees of his father with regard to idolatry and also to expiate his father's sins by degradation of his remains.[40] Perhaps the reinterment of the bones of king Uzziah around A.D. 50 as recorded in the Uzziah inscription, ("Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah — Do not open."), is more than a prohibition against disturbing the second burial of the leper king and reflects more than a growing reverence paid to both graves and relics. It is possible that Uzziah was denied burial in the "sepulchers of the kings" (II Kings 15:7; II Chron. 26:23) because he was a leper or for some other reason not understood by a later generation. The desire of the pious to bring his remains to their rightful place thus is in harmony with the whole complex of ideas associated with secondary burials.

Though the archaeological evidence for the custom of ossilegium suggests its discontinuance at Beth She'arim in the 4th century, the ongoing desire of pious Jews to be buried in Israel or even to have a clod of heavy soil thrown on their coffins, symbolic of their return to Zion, provides vivid attestation of continuation of this tradition in modern times.

Conclusion

To be sure, the placing together of human skeletal remains in a common pit or chamber might at first glance seem to be an indiscriminate or harsh way of joining one's family in the hereafter. It might seem that secondary burial stands in contradiction to the frequent maledictions against disturbing the dead or in violation of the ordinances that relate to ritual

39. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 47b (Soncino Translation).
40. *Mishnah Pesaḥim* 4.9; Babylonian Talmud, *Pesaḥim* 56a and *Berakoth* 10b; Jerusalem Talmud, *Pesaḥim* 9.1.

purity. Analysis of all the data, however, now indicates that such a procedure for the disposition of human remains is far more common and in keeping with Semitic thought than has heretofore been recognized. In a secondary burial the emphasis is on the safekeeping of remains within the precincts of the family tomb, and this seems to be in close harmony with the Semitic conception of the nature of man. In light of this the biblical idioms for death and burial are quite apt.

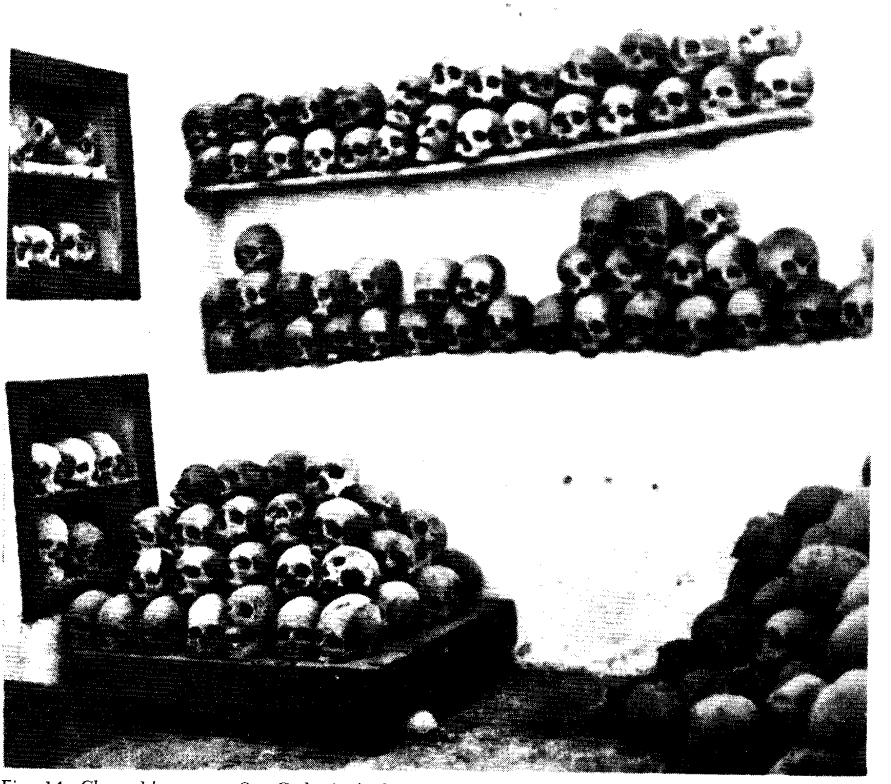

Fig. 14. Charnel-house at St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai. From Rothenberg, *God's Wilderness*, Pl. 64.

Despite the apparent silence of the New Testament in regard to ossilegium, the preservation of a martyr's remains or the veneration of a Christian saint in a relic chest seems best explained as an outgrowth of ancient Near Eastern burial customs. Dramatic evidence that secondary burial continues in precisely the form in which we have described it comes from the monastery of St. Catherine's in Sinai (Fig. 14)[41] There the monks first bury their

41. B. Rothenberg, *God's Wilderness* (1961), p. 159.

dead in a beautiful garden cemetery just outside the monastery wall. After a year the bones and skulls are gathered up and piled separately in the charnel house. In areas where conservatism runs deep, it is not strange to find the practices of a later period rooted in the warp and woof of ancient tradition.

Cumulative Subject Index to The Biblical Archaeologist

Professor John McRay of David Lipscomb College has produced a cumulative subject index for the first thirty volumes (1938-1967) of *The Biblical Archaeologist*. Many readers who possess a complete set, and many libraries, may find this a very useful index to have. Dr. McRay prepared it for his use in classes, but he has decided to have it printed for wider dissemination with the approval of the Publications Committee of ASOR. The index is offered at a cost of $1.25 *prepaid*, and that will cover mailing cost. Orders are to be sent directly to

Professor John McRay
David Lipscomb College
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Archaeological News and Views

The two latest issues of the ASOR newsletter have just come to my desk. Robert G. Boling, my colleague at McCormick Seminary and in 1968-69 a fellow at the Jerusalem School, has taken over the job of editing the newsletters, and he has added to their interest by including photographs and a little sparkle to the news items.

Of special interest in the current letters is a report on two campaigns at a low mound called Tell el-Fakhar in upper Iraq, about twenty miles from the famous site of Nuzi. Here Iraqi archaeologists have found, between 1967 and 1969, the remains of two stratified towns belonging to the second millennium B.C. The upper one dates near the end of the millennium, and the lower, more impressive, to the fifteenth century. From the ruins of the lower layer have come about 1000 tablets, at least some of which are contracts and business documents very much like those found at Nuzi of the same period. That is, here is more evidence for the application of Hurrian law and custom. The Nuzi tablets, as is well-known to *BA* readers, provided a flood of light on customs assumed in some of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. A fuller report on the finds at Tell el-Fakhar is to appear in the journal *Sumer*, in the course of this year.