

## ***CHAPTER 1***

### ***INTRODUCTION***

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This paper is a contextual study of burial customs of the Old Testament Philistines. It will examine the available archaeological and literary material related to this particular ancient community. Important values and beliefs of ancient peoples were communicated through art, literature, cult, burial customs, and other elements of their communal existence. It is imperative, in order to gain a more complete understanding of the ways these people thought and lived, to uncover everything that can be known from as many of these areas as possible. Building on existing research and theories of death, this paper seeks to contribute to the developing comprehension of the peoples under consideration.

Given the subject matter of this research, the need for a careful approach is accentuated. Human burials, besides being potentially one of the most enlightening aspects of the study of ancient cultures, are an inviolable part of the study of human existence and history. Davis (1988:179) emphasizes that such a pursuit should be done with “scientific discipline and ethical sensitivity,” though he acknowledges it has not

always been done with this kind of forethought and concern. His caution is well taken and this paper is presented with respect for the ancient peoples it seeks to better define, with sensitivity to this sacred aspect of human experience.

Another critical aspect of ancient Near Eastern thought currently attracting quite a bit of attention is the cult of the dead. Various interpretations exist regarding what types of practices actually constitute the cult. Much of the work done has been from the ancient Israelite context. Present scholarship is divided between interpretations that lean toward the literary records and those that rely more on archaeological evidence. Those taking the literary perspective, at times, tend to minimize death cult activities. Those focusing more on material data tend to emphasize the cult. This paper will stress the material record though it neither seeks to diminish nor overstate the powers of the deceased in the mindset of the ancient communities considered. Commenting on the varied death cult interpretations from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bloch-Smith (2002:139) cautions that the ancient dead are presently being “stripped of their powers.”

A goal here will be to let the material evidence speak for itself as much as possible. This is necessary primarily due to the lack of Philistine literature. Other literatures will be consulted, however, in order gain their impressions of Philistine practice.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper seeks to contribute to the present understanding of the Iron Age Philistine culture by giving special attention to burials from ancient Israel/Canaan that contain evidence of Philistine presence or influence. Recent research has provided a clearer, and overall a more positive view of the Old Testament Philistines. The enduring animosity between the Philistines and Israelites seen in the Bible has previously produced in the minds of some interpreters, an image of an uncivilized people. This is no longer the case. Current studies, influenced by the material evidence and a more lucid understanding and interpretation of biblical literature, have revealed a well developed society who exerted influence on many of their neighbors around them.

Concerning the crucial role that grave investigations play in archaeological study, Heizer (1959:84) states,

“More detail concerning the life of the people can be obtained from burials than from any other type of feature found by the archaeologist, except data incident to such major catastrophes as the destruction of Pompeii. The reason is simple: burials are almost the only major class of archaeological features that one can expect to find in the original complete condition, not worn down by use, and exactly as the people left them.”

Cooley (1968:7) suggests the “general pattern” of burials can be known by analyzing tomb contents. Another benefit of archaeology/tomb excavation is that items which could have long since deteriorated are sometimes preserved in the tombs. In the

protected environment of the grave, items such as “wood, leather, or vegetable matter” (Cooley 1968:13) were able to survive even after centuries of time.

Dever (1994:108) cautions that there are few “facts” in archaeology and he illustrates his point by emphasizing the subjectivity involved in the interpretive process. Whatever they are called, the tangible data of archaeology provides researchers a point of departure for their analysis.

Davis (1988:180) indicates three underlying objectives of tomb excavation: religious, societal, and historical. One of the more specific reasons, related to the religious purpose, is to help define thoughts regarding death and afterlife. Scheffler (2000:116) purports that because of the mysteries of death and afterlife this uncharted area of human experience may be considered the “mother of religion.” It is suggested that the unknown of death leads one to search beyond their existence and “cling to their gods.” He affirms that archaeological research, as it relates to burials, can provide valuable clues to how the ancient peoples viewed death. The data uncovered can also reveal indications of the veneration of ancestors, which is the central component to ancient Near Eastern death cult practice. This paper will explore the issue of the cult of the dead and offer some interpretations of the available evidence in a later chapter.

To reemphasize, one of the underlying purposes motivating this research is to help clarify the image of the biblical peoples being investigated here. It must therefore be determined that such a study sheds light on an understanding of the Old Testament to make the effort worthwhile from a theological point of view. By use of the archaeological and literary information, this paper will seek to achieve this elucidation by its consideration of burials and related materials that show evidence of having been under

Philistine influence. One of the greatest challenges faced in this type of study is to offer an interpretation of the data presented. Tainter (1978:109) emphasizes that the difficulty in interpreting the archaeological and funerary material should not become an obstacle but should be seen as an opportunity. Cooley (1968:7) affirms the demanding aspect of such a pursuit is not the “what” but the “why.” It is relatively easy to identify what the ancient peoples did with the dead, but it is a much more difficult problem to comprehend why it was done.

There are a number of limitations that surface in this kind of study. The burial customs traceable at the sites presented show evidence of the influence of other people groups. This blurring of the lines prevents the clearest picture from being imagined. Brug (1985:156) affirms this type of limitation when he states “burial customs do not correspond with linguistic or political boundaries.” This is especially true in the material to be presented here. The extent of Philistine evidence in the burials is not confined to the area typically known as Philistia.

There are no cemeteries from the Philistine five city Pentapolis to examine. These are the biblical cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath. The sites and burials to be examined will be from the phase 2 Philistine occupation, characterized by the presence of typical bichrome ware, or what Singer (1985:112) refers to as “classical” Philistine pottery. This means that the earliest Philistines, or those originally settling in the eighth year of Ramesses III, will not be known. However, burial customs of their subsequent generations can be known to a degree. Given such a road block, the burial customs to be explored in this paper will be examined as they are found in their

individual contexts, with an understanding that these ancient populations were made up of an ethnic mixture of backgrounds.

There are a number of reasons as to why cemeteries have not been found near the cities of the Pentapolis. Kletter's (2002:39) discussion on the lack of Iron I burials in the central highlands may also apply to this context. His most radical suggestion, though he acknowledges is not as viable as the others, is that the dead were left unattended. A more tenable option is that the graves are simply "invisible" to the modern eye. These graves, he suggests, may have been shallow and located outside the settlements. These factors, among others, would make locating burials difficult and would have made them vulnerable to destruction throughout antiquity.

It may be argued, due to this limitation, that Philistine burial customs cannot be known at all. Brug (1985:202) plainly states, "there is no burial trait" that can be identified as Philistine. He goes on to say that all customs and forms possibly defined as Philistine also appear in burials not associated with the Philistines. It should be noted that the efforts of this research do not attempt to portray an image of a single monolithic culture with complete uniformity in every facet of its death cult/rites. It will set out to uncover what can be known about the communities utilizing the graves where Philistine material culture has been found. It is acknowledged that this evidence may represent the presence of Philistines, and at least Philistine influence. The task of attempting to discern the distinction between presence and influence is challenging due to the great diversity among the obtainable information. It should also be noted that this later phase of Philistine presence in Canaan, not only represents a transition in pottery, but also a

relocation of their populations. As they began to expand into different areas, such as Gezer, they spread their culture and adopted new customs.

Besides the mixture of cultural influences present in the burial contexts under consideration, there is also the related problem of the measurable level of Philistine evidence among the material data available. Dever (1974:54) and Singer (1985:117) both highlight this problem. Dever, the excavator at Gezer, indicates that Philistine pottery is rare in the earliest stratum (12) at that location. It then appears to decline in numbers at the end of the period of occupation. Yet he (1993:504) states that the “Philistine period at Gezer is especially well attested, with strata XIII to XI all belonging to this horizon.” The earliest level mentioned would be the first appearance there. It seems that their presence at this location would also be evidence of expansion beyond their initial five-city settlements.

Baly (1957:139-140) indicates that such movement or expansion would have been logistically feasible, allowing for regular interchange. Political restrictions and motivations have been cited as reasons for expansion as well. Na’aman (2000:1ff) provides some of the argument applicable here. Though much of his time is spent attempting to clarify the Low/High chronology debate and its various champions, he makes some interesting contributions to the associations made between Monochrome pottery, sites, and residents.

Brug (1985:156) cites the Tell el-Farah tomb context as another example of cultural mix. It will be presented as one of the locations where, to complicate the issue further, anthropoid clay coffins have been found in the same setting with Philistine pottery. Brug points out, however, that less than 10% of the pottery was Philistine in this

site. In fact, he indicates that the evidence from all the graves where Philistine pottery is present consistently reflects this nearly insignificant percentage of the associated pottery. This does not mean, however, that Philistine burial customs should not be pursued.

Ehrlich (1996:11) contributes some important insights to the discussion of the percentages of Philistine pottery among the various pottery assemblages. He cites the example of Tell Qasile, which is identified as the only original city found, established by Philistines on virgin soil (Dothan 1985:39). Though the apparent later establishment of this site may be verifiable due to the absence of monochrome pottery, it seems the phase 2 Philistines established this city as a part of their expansion program during the phase 2 period of Iron I. Excavator A. Mazar (1993:1204) reported a marked decline in pottery between stratum XII and the later stratum XI. He states that the Philistine pottery changes from the earlier bichrome over a white slip to a less ornate monochrome decoration. However, Ehrlich states, only 20% of the pottery found there was the typical Philistine bichrome ware. This has led to the interpretation that the bichrome pottery and its monochrome predecessor were “the fine china or luxury ware of their time.”

This information could significantly influence the interpretations of the burials to be considered in this paper. Even in major Philistine centers such as Ekron, (T. Dothan 2000:153) the pottery used was not exclusively bichrome or Aegean based in style. It is not surprising then to see large amounts of non-Philistine pottery in the so-called lesser sites. It may be that this non-Philistine or Canaanite ware was the pottery being produced in larger quantities by local potters for every day use in these communities. Finkelstein (1997:225) raises a pertinent question regarding pottery style percentages. He points out that it is a difficult task to determine how much bichrome ware has to be present in a site

for it to be called “Philistine.” A response might be: there simply is no automatic percentage, and even if a site yields a very strong percentage of bichrome ware the presence of the pottery alone does not give positive proof of ethnicity. The presence of the pottery in a site, however, can at least give positive evidence of Philistine influence if not Philistine presence.

### **1.3 A SYMBIOTIC MODEL**

This paper will support the premise that the Philistines, like other people groups appearing during Iron Age Canaan, lived in a relatively symbiotic relationship with those around them. This concept echoes Thucydides’ comment that “we do not copy our neighbors, but are an example to them” (Nulle 1980:96). Monk et al. (1998:309) provides a definition of the term “symbiosis” being used here. The term literally means “life together, interdependent life, life lived mutually or reciprocally.” This development is arguably a part of any society. In a sense it is a survival of the fittest social model. In the context under consideration here a reciprocal and interdependent existence is evident

in a number of ways. This can be seen in the lack of a language barrier. LaRue (1970:105) points out that the Bible shows the various people groups, Philistines included, communicating with each other “without difficulty.” If these ancient peoples were xenophobic it did not keep them from interaction. Xenophobia is described by Matthews and Moyer (1998:35) as a fear of foreigners.

Sharon (1994:121) seems to affirm this concept when she states, “the principle of survival of the fittest describes the fact that more advanced peoples will eradicate less advanced peoples or at least impose their culture over them, thus advancing human culture as a whole.” The whole process of cultural connectedness and accompanying acculturation is visible in the material record at sites associated with Philistine culture. It can be traced in the pottery transitions of the Iron I Philistines’ original Mycenaean IIIc, to the bichrome, and later wares with the red slip.

The evidence presented does not seem to lend support to the concept that the Philistines were an indigenous Canaanite group of people evolving during the Late Bronze Age and eventually becoming known as “Philistine” (Drews 1998:39-61). This approach may be beneficial in providing a balanced view of these ancient communities, but overall it appears that the migratory theory put forth by Moshe and Trude Dothan throughout their various publications, and others, is most feasible. The latter theory states that the Philistines were a people of Aegean background who settled in the Levant in the early twelfth century and beginning of the Iron Age.

Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau (1996:94) make the connection between Philistine culture and the material evidence from their early settlements. They also

recognize that some of these distinct Philistine traditions were lost in time due to the constant interaction between the various people groups of that time and area.

The collective data from the archaeological, anthropological, and historical sources supports the image of the Philistines as an amalgamation of cultures from different ethnic backgrounds. It is an underlying supposition of this paper that the Philistines of the Old Testament were of an Aegean base, concurring with the pattern presented. The subsequent intercultural relationships are evident from the appearance and evolution of their characteristic bichrome pottery to the mixture of customs in the burials. The mingling of cultural and ethnic characteristics and practices is identified as the symbiotic model in this paper. Though they are truly the “outsiders” in Iron I Canaan, they appear to blend into the cultural milieu of the geographic context. Wright (1960:16) states rather perfunctorily that the burials of Israel and Canaan were identical. His observations were based on interments, grave contents, and associated articles. He states objects were placed by the members of the family that were important to the individual and they would need in the afterlife. This again affirms the symbiotic model prevalent throughout the area.

Cooley’s (1968:4) research on Canaanite burials pursued the “common social traditions” of what he called the “total culture area” of Canaan. In that work, which pertains at least in part to the cross-cultural evidence of the social environment of the Old Testament world, there is evidence presented for this same type of intercultural exchange of ideas and customs. Cornelius (1994:1ff) has presented a masterful work on Canaanite iconography. He affirms the concept being put forth here in the symbiotic model. His

research has shown that the interchange between nations during the Late Bronze Age set the stage for continued contact into the Iron Age.

The symbiotic model will be sustained by the three following approaches: archaeological, literary, and anthropological. A brief summary of each discipline's contribution to this archetype will be provided here, but the augmentation of the model will take place throughout the paper. The symbiotic model is clearly traceable in the archaeological record through a study of Philistine pottery. The Philistines arrived in Canaan around 1175 and settled along the eastern Mediterranean coast. Early Philistine presence is traceable by the appearance of a monochrome Mycenaean or Aegean style pottery. This pottery is identified as phase 1 by Stager (1998:160-161). Eventually the Mycenaean pottery began to incorporate some of the techniques in structure, as well as stylistic characteristics of neighboring cultures, such as the Egyptian and Canaanite, while at the same time maintaining aspects of its original design. In time this pottery emerges as phase 2 Philistine or bichrome ware.

This clear identification of the pottery allows Philistine culture to be specified in the various archaeological settings. This also highlights one of the key problems in the study of Philistine burials, in that the burials presented yield the later bichrome ware. This indicates a later occupation of these sites as opposed to an earlier settlement of Philistines in these locations. It should be noted, however, that a century is a long time in which many changes and developments can occur. The burial data will show that these transitions were taking place among Philistine communities beyond typical Philistia. The vessels pictured in Plate 1 show some of the similarities in the potting customs mentioned.



**Figure 1.** *Mycenaean Stirrup Jar and Imitation.* Photo by S. Fugitt, courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.  
NOTE: The Imitation Stirrup Jar (on left) is from Beth Shean, Stratum VI, dated to Iron Age I.



**Figure 2.** *Philistine stirrup jar.* Dothan and Dothan 1992: plate 5

**Plate 1.** *Mycenaean and Philistine pottery comparison.* Vessels pictured are known as the stirrup jar, identified by the false spout connected to the handles. The actual spout is off centered. Structural and stylistic similarities are observed.

The symbiotic model is also supported in the literary record. More detail will be given on this aspect of the model in chapter seven. In summary at this point, the Philistines are linked to the deities Dagon and Baal in the Old Testament. This connection may imply some level of Mesopotamian influence upon them. The literatures of Ugarit and Mesopotamia will be cited as support for the configuration of symbiosis seen here. Chapter seven includes a section on deities and death, which will attempt to bring some of these loose ends together, tying the discussion back to the context of Philistine-influenced burials.

The symbiotic model is also supported with evidence compiled by an anthropological approach. Details of skeletal analyses will be supplied in the chapter on the treatment of bodies. This material is based on a limited number of examinations. In brief, the results show a mixture of backgrounds. It does not appear that the Philistines were a single monolithic ethnic community. It should be emphasized that in this paper the symbiotic model is seen as more than the influence of one group of peoples, such as the Egyptians, upon the Philistines. It is the influence of an entire region of various people groups each living in close proximity to the other, exchanging ideas and goods.

Singer (1985:114) has reported that the awareness of the symbiosis of Philistine and Egyptian cultures is the result of the “historical reasoning” of Alt, Albright and other scholars. The symbiotic model presented in this paper simply builds on this pattern to include other accumulated influences during the entire Iron I period. In this sense, the model reaches back to include this culture’s Aegean origin, encompasses the obvious Egyptian influence, and reaches beyond these to incorporate the traceable evidences of indigenous Canaanite traits.

Just as there are traceable distinctions or differences among these groups, there is also evidence which reflects the common culture shared among them. It is apparent that they borrowed certain identifiable cultural distinctives and adopted them as their own. These points of commonality or evidences of cultural interchange comprise the symbiotic model being described.

This model should not be misunderstood as attempting to say that all cultures of Iron I Canaan were comparable in every way. It is simply attempting to point to those areas that are paralleled, and identify the probability that culture and customs begin with a particular community and then spread to their neighbors and others with which they have contact. This influence works both ways, in that these communities borrowed and shared back and forth.

It should also be noted that this paper is not necessarily attempting to identify the origin of certain customs pertaining to burials, though some traditions are traceable. Such a study would take the project beyond the boundaries of its scope. Within the confines described in this section, the symbiotic model will simply strive to point out the areas of common custom and practice among the peoples of Iron Age I Canaan.

Supporting the concept that the evidence addresses this shared cultural model, Waldbaum (1966:331) states that “Philistine cultural material contains many elements adapted and assimilated from several Mediterranean sources during the unsettled wanderings of the Philistines...” These adaptations and assimilations which she also labels “eclectic tendencies,” in time produced the characteristic culture called “Philistine.” This “heterogeneity” (1966:332) will become visible through the examination of burial material at Philistine-influenced sites. Evidence supporting an

expansion of the study will surface as the project evolves, but again, a thorough examination of this comparative nature would go beyond the scope of the paper.

The typical discussion regarding the Philistines of the Old Testament focuses on how they were different from their neighbors, particularly the Israelites. T. Dothan and Cohn (1994:61-73) emphasize this point in an article entitled, “The Philistine as Other: Biblical Rhetoric and Archaeological Reality.” In the article the Philistine “other” is emphasized through the citing of both the literary and archaeological sources. They certainly differed in a number of ways, not the least of which was in their worship of deities other than Yahweh.

The similarities, however, can be seen in the evidence reflecting intercultural exchange as a result of the constant social communication and interaction. It is apparent through the pottery record that trade was commonly practiced and the ancient peoples were constantly utilizing new methods of self expression. Killebrew (2000:233) acknowledges the view, currently held by many scholars, which states that trade between Canaan, Cyprus, and other areas in the eastern Mediterranean virtually ceased with the beginning of the Iron Age. Her article reveals evidence that trading was still active throughout this later period, though with a lesser intensity. Interestingly, Dumas (1998:131) refers to Homer’s ‘countless trinkets’ as a sign of rigorous economic activity throughout the Mediterranean.

Continued social contact would have allowed a workable association with their neighbors to have been developed and sustained. The apparent cohesive relationship will be a part of the symbiotic model. Such an assertion can be supported by references to these people groups in the literary records. The Old Testament seems to put forward an

association between the Philistines and Israelites that, though strained politically and militarily, allows for relatively unhindered cultural exchange. Such is seen in the repeated contacts between these communities without evidence of any type of linguistic barrier inhibiting their communication.

There is clear burial evidence that will point to this symbiotic model. It can be attested in the similar tomb types, body treatments and positioning, grave offerings, and most any facet of the funerary material. As pointed out above, the Philistine pottery will be one of the determining factors in which sites should be pursued for this study, but the particular types of vessels will also point back again to this symbiotic model being presented. The sites selected for presentation in this paper are those that can be more clearly associated with Philistine material culture. Two other sites that have surfaced in this research, other than those to be dealt with, are Beth Shemesh and Megiddo. The ambiguity of the association of Philistine pottery and these burials prevent them from being a major part of the discussion. Bunivovitz & Lederman (1993:250) indicate, however, that some Philistine bichrome pottery was found in Beth Shemesh Stratum III.

A dominant burial offering which supports this model is the burial bowl. It commonly appeared in the burials with other types of ceramic wares. These may be seen in burials and tombs throughout Iron Age sites in Israel, and are not limited to those containing Philistine pottery. In fact, Brug (1985:162) refers to the appearance of these bowls as a “Canaanite trait.” He also points out that bowls are rare in burials found in Greece. This caution and others should be well taken and an effort will be made not to assume the presence of pottery is necessarily evidence of the presence of a particular cultural or ethnic group of people. The bowl could possibly appear as part of a death cult

ritual and the accompanying feeding of the dead. This and other possibilities will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. It is suggested here that when it is found in the Philistine influenced sites that the bowl can serve as an indicator of the symbiotic model, and that it is present in the burial setting as a result of the blending and adopting of cultic concepts.

An example of how the biblical records reflect this pattern of symbiosis is found in the references to Philistine worship of the Canaanite deity Dagan/Dagon (e.g. Judges 16:23; 1 Samuel 5:2). Mazar (2000:214) indicates that the worship of Dagon has been linked to northern Syria and the Euphrates valley. It has been traced to as early as the third millennium, yet there is no evidence associating it with southern Canaan during the Bronze Age. It may be suggested that the Philistines were either influenced to worship Dagon as they passed through Syria on their migration to the southern Levant, or they were influenced by the Phoenicians, the cultural successors to the Canaanites. Given the Philistine pattern of migration, the latter suggestion would seem to be more likely.

Generally speaking, the material evidence will also be seen to sustain this argument. Waldbaum (1966:337) observes that residents in places such as Ugarit and Cyprus who were originally from a Greek-like background would have interacted with the indigenous peoples and adapted to the local customs. She was referring to the fact that these communities would have used the tomb types already in place in these locations, which supports the symbiotic model presented here. The pottery evidence also agrees with such a picture of symbiosis as was seen in the pottery comparison above.

T. Dothan (2000:145) states that from the archaeological evidence a “picture of ethnic coexistence emerges.” McHugh (1995:18) cautions that a single attitude toward

burials and their study cannot be projected upon the historical contexts. It would seem that each burial, though surely influenced by a larger cultural norm, must be considered within its own setting, and consideration given to all aspects of the effort. Information points to the likelihood that not only the Philistines, but many Levantine peoples of this period, were a part of this shared culture. Evidence shows that these ancient neighbors shared more than literatures and pottery styles. It seems they also shared ideas about life, death, and related issues.

In many facets of the material documentation such interchange is measurable, and the burial data seem to be no less an indication of this model. Boshoff (2000:106) provides a notable example of the syncretistic nature of this exchange of ideas from a tomb at Khirbet el-Qom; a site located a very short distance from Aitun, referring to “Yahweh and his Asherah.” This reference accompanies his comments on the inscription from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, where El is paralleled to Baal and again Yahweh is seen with his Asherah. These locations are also cited by Lewis (2002:182) in connection to funerary concerns. This example of what is sometimes called “popular religion,” or the religion practiced by the populace, illustrates the pattern of symbiosis set forth in this paper. The supposition underlying the research herein is that these ancient peoples were not only assimilating practices of worship, but they were also likely sharing customs that pertained to the burial of their dead.

This syncretism is accentuated since the Philistines appear to have been an eclectic mixture of peoples with different ethnic backgrounds. The fact that there are no cemeteries yet examined at the Philistine cities of the Pentapolis; the five biblical cities initially settled by the Philistines around 1175 BC, also poses a problem in clearly

defining Philistine burials. Such ambiguity calls for a deeper study of the data so that more explicit definitions can be brought into focus. For this reason, a section of the next chapter is devoted to the clarification of terminologies.

The pattern of shared cultural expression has become such a hallmark in some circles of archaeological research that it has prompted articles such as Fritz's work, published in the July/August 2002 edition of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, entitled *Israelites and Canaanites: You **Can** Tell Them Apart*. The pattern of symbiosis presented is seen as a beneficial and essential part of the dialogue intended to move the project toward an interpretation of the data. While it does support the view that the Philistines, as well as all the communities living in close proximity to each other in Iron Age Canaan, were blended in many ways, this model does not deny the distinguishing characteristics of separate cultures such as is seen in the pottery classifications and other identifiable features of their daily life.

The fact that cultures are interdependent upon each other is verifiable archaeologically and otherwise. Exactly how they influence one another is often a fairly subjective judgment to make. Sharon (1994:130) affirms the concept of the survival of the fittest—sociologically. This is the principle that the more advanced peoples will “eradicate less advanced peoples or at least impose their culture over them, thus advancing human culture as a whole.” This suggestion holds great pragmatic value for an understanding of the ancient cultures. When better resources or methods become available communities will begin using them. This would seem to echo the familiar adage that “necessity is the mother of invention.” Essentially, if it works it will be incorporated into every day use.

Alekshin (1983:137) contends that it is possible to identify burial customs with ethnic communities. It is tenuous to assume that burial practices alone can provide definitive information regarding a knowledge of community norms and beliefs. The broader the archaeological scope provided at a given site, the more solid the interpretation of specific burial from that particular context. The fact is, burial evidence is only one ingredient in the over archaeological mix. For this reason, this paper will focus some attention on the broader archaeological information related to the sites under consideration.

An example of the limitations of making the solid link between burials and ethnicity may be seen in Alekshin's second "informational unit." He (1983:138) seems to assume that a change in burial custom necessarily denotes a change in people groups or residents of a certain location. This assertion may be challenged in that changes may at times reflect ideological changes in a given community and not necessarily be related to ethnic changes in the population.

While this pattern of interpretation will be focused on the material from burials under consideration, it also acknowledges the influence trade and social contacts had on the developing of conceptual theology. Various kinds of goods, including pottery, metal implements, and perishable products, were being traded on a regular basis. This fact inhibits a definite connection between the people and the pottery, or any other element of material evidence. The presence of this evidence, though certainly a sign of cultural influence, may not necessarily be proof of the presence of a particular culture. This basic and fundamental idea will be reemphasized throughout the project at hand.

Schloen (2002 online) provides some information that assists in the attempt to link cultures with material artifacts. His article makes an interesting point concerning loom weights and their ability to provide more of a cultural link than even pottery may allow at times. These weights come from the Philistine occupation level at Ashkelon. He points out that it is possible a few skilled potters could have made the pottery found at the site. On the other hand, the “pinched” loom weights are a simple element of daily routine and reflect more the custom of the people residing there during that time in history. Information of this nature provides a timely reminder that there are other ways to link cultures besides the usual pottery associations. Such methods may also be used to support connections already made.

Another one of the ways these cultural connections have been sought is through the study of faunal remains. This facet of the information is illuminating to the research when the presence of animals can be detected in the graves, such as the pig bones from the cremation burial in Grave 63 at Azor. In his article entitled “Food for the Gods: The Identification of Sacrificial Faunal Assemblages in the Ancient Near East—Tel Mique-Ekron, A Case Study,” Maher (2001:8) relates that his analysis reveals that by the 7th century 97.8% of the animal bones examined from Temple Complex 650 were those of sheep and goats. Evidence of pig remains will also be highlighted, since the Philistines are seen as associated with them.

In a related discussion regarding the identification of peoples and cultures, Drews (1998:39) suggests that the thing that changed regarding the Canaanites and Philistines in the transitional period between the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages was not the people themselves, but their names. This concept seems to be a possible and logical response to

the apparent mixing of the various cultural elements. Conversely, this paper supports the interpretation that the Philistines were the result of a new ethnic element settling in the area with their own separate cultural identity.

Further evidence to support the pattern of symbiosis is the meager yet discernable traces of written material. One such example is the few letters of script found in the 2000 season of excavation at Tell es-Safi/Gath. The dig director, Dr. Aren M. Maeir of Bar Ilan University (Maeir and Ehrlich 2002 online), has reported that a few “Alephs” were found on some jar handles and a few other less distinguishable letters were found scratched on a storage jar after the firing process was completed.

This possible 8<sup>th</sup> century remnant of Philistine writing is not much, but it could reflect something of the model being described. Envisioned here is a transition of these Aegean, Greek-type language speaking peoples adopting the use of a Semitic language like their neighbors around them. This identifiable transition once again emphasizes the symbiotic interaction between the peoples of this time and area. With the background and discussion given here, the problems associated with identifying Philistine burials may be better understood.

#### **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The available material highlighted throughout this paper reveals several reasons a simple resolution cannot be found. Practically speaking, it should be reiterated that there are no cemeteries to evaluate at any of the cities of the Pentapolis; the five major population centers identified in the Old Testament with the Philistines during Iron Age I Canaan. Examples of Philistine pottery verifies the influence of this culture, such as Ovadiah's (1993:465) reference to typical Philistine Iron I pottery found in Phythian-Adam's trenches. Unfortunately, the pottery has not been found in a burial context at these sites. This leads the investigation to be done in sites of less apparent biblical significance. Nonetheless, the burials to be analyzed in this paper are linked archaeologically to an Aegean type Philistine culture. Some of the locations presented will be linked to the Old Testament and these associations will be brought out when applicable. It is fortunate that there are graves to study at all, since other cultures, such as the Old Testament kingdom of Israel, have yielded none or little to consider. It seems Yezerski (1999:258) focuses his study on the burials of Judah for that very reason.

Kletter (2002:28) also emphasizes this point. He is concerned that the lack of burials in the central highlands is not fully comprehended. He cites a number of graves from both the Late Bronze and Iron II periods in this area, while stressing the scantiness of those in an Iron I setting. He cites examples of discrepancies that have emerged in the dating of pottery to the Iron I period that actually derived from either the LB or Iron II

periods. Kletter's argument cautions the researcher to be cognizant of the difficulties in dating burials and burial contents.

Another related complication faced in this project is what might be thought of as an identification problem. That is, just because Philistine or Philistine-type material remains are found in a tomb does not give positive proof that the individuals buried there were Philistine. This problem is accentuated by the fact that the Philistines left no written records pertaining to interment or related activities. The fact is, no substantial amount of written material of any kind from this Old Testament people group has been found to this day.

Another problem will arise as the burial material is presented. The fact that tombs have often been disturbed complicates the process of interpretation. Burials may have been disturbed in antiquity by tomb robbers, wild animals, or some other natural cause. Cooley (1968:113) states that from his study of Canaanite tombs the most destructive force was quarrying. He also states that tombs were sometimes destroyed when walls for later structures were constructed over them. Yezerski (1999:253) emphasizes that the robbed tombs throughout Judah are difficult to trace in terms of their Iron Age provenance. He stresses that this complication has led some burials to be dated later than they should be.

It is also possible that the disturbance could have been in recent times by more deviant means. There have been instances of illegal excavations in which apparently large amounts of antiquities have been unearthed and sold to private collectors. T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992: 203) makes reference to such activities. Whatever the cause of disturbances in the burials to be explored in this paper, it is understood that they

must be studied for what they are with simply an added step in the process of interpretation of the remains. This extra step is the observance of the rearrangement of the burial contents, and the attempt to ascribe meaning to them in the context in which they are found.

The process of interpreting the artifactual remains from the burials also highlights another limitation. A part of the interpretative procedure involves the attempt of gathering enough data to understand the feelings and thoughts of the families, communities, and individuals at the time of death, interment, and even during the successive weeks and months following. These are very subjective areas and impossible to know assuredly. One is again reminded of the mute nature of the archaeological information, and the responsibility of the researcher to provide logical interpretive analyses.

### **1.5 HOW SCHOLARS HAVE DEALT WITH THE PROBLEM**

Scholarship in Philistine studies has come a long way from the early twentieth century when Petrie unearthed the five rock-hewn tombs at Tel el Farah and concluded

they belonged to the seranim (lords) of the Old Testament Philistines. His assertion was later shown to be untenable and researchers have discovered that giving such positive identification to Philistine burials has proven to be somewhat elusive. More details regarding Petrie's specific tombs will be provided in chapter 6 on anthropoid clay coffins, but their mention here underscores the problems that have arisen in the study of Philistine burials.

It is currently understood that a conclusive picture of Philistine burials and funerary practices cannot be known. This is due to the fact that no cemeteries have been located at the major sites where significant amounts of the identifiable transitions of Mycenaean to Philistine bichrome ware are present in the pottery record. The identification of this transition in the pottery record helps to confirm a true sense of this culture from its earliest stage.

T. Dothan has used the material information to clarify the Philistine culture in a number of ways. Her extensive 1982 publication has helped to define this ancient society. It has provided tools with which Philistine material culture may be identified. She (1994:70) states that several tombs connected to Philistine culture by the contents found in the burials can be investigated. Concerning one aspect of funerary practice she affirms that it is "possible to adduce some picture of Philistine mourning customs from the terra cotta female mourning figurines found in burial sites." Ultimately, an aim of the paper is to present what can be known about Philistine burials in their context by exploring this type of material data.

From a study of the compiled results it should be noted that it is rare to find the combination of Mycenaean and Philistine pottery appearing together. This combination

can reflect the transition between two periods and may be an indicator of the presence of early Philistines. A couple of sites where this may occur is Gezer and Lachish. It should be remembered that at times the pottery types at the site may not always be found in the burials. This point highlights the fact that the burials in this study must be examined within the sphere of their own context, allowing the archaeological and material information to speak for itself and tell its story.

Various types of burials and their particular complications will be discussed in the following chapters. One area of discussion related to Philistine burial practices that is especially nagging to the researcher is that of anthropoid coffins. It seems Petrie logically linked them to the Philistines because of accompanying pottery in the tombs at Tell el-Farah. Dothan and Dothan (1992:69-70) indicate that Albright rejected Petrie's chronology which placed Philistine presence at the site too early. While Albright supported the later arrival of the Philistines, he did appear to acknowledge the Philistines' use of the anthropoid coffins. Albright (1951:117) states at one time, "It seems probable that the popularity of this type of burial in this period was due partly, at least, to Philistine influence."

Current publications still reflect a lack of uniformity in interpretation of the coffins, which highlights the scholarly discussion and disagreement that surrounds this aspect of Philistine burials. Examples of the differing viewpoints will be offered in the chapter devoted to this particular subject. It should be noted that such a lack of continuity is not unusual in scholarly studies related to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, and should not be viewed as detrimental to the process, but rather, an essential step in the journey toward a more complete understanding of the ancient people described there.

## **1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARIES**

The purpose of the present chapter is to identify the research problem at hand pertaining to Philistine burials. It introduces some key directions the research goes, explains the symbiotic model, and summarizes each chapter. Chapter two will set the course toward finding some solutions to the problem identified. It will also give examples to help clarify an understanding of the problem. One way it goes about this is to specify sites where Philistine influence has been identified in a burial setting. It will then set the course for the rest of the paper which will provide the necessary details from those tombs in order that some type of Philistine association or identification can be made.

Chapter three will outline the various types of burials and tombs found in the settings under consideration. Following the previously described model of symbiosis, this chapter will identify possible cultural influences upon these burials. Different types of tombs and burials may have been chosen for a variety of reasons and not exclusively because a particular type of tomb may have been representative of a specific cultural custom. At least some of the possibilities will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

Chapter four is entitled “Treatment of bodies.” Given the lack of positive identification of Philistine burials and skeletal remains, this chapter will rely on the symbiotic model and describe in general the evidence of intercultural exchange. This

discussion will build on chapter three and the burial types and tombs identified there. This chapter will also offer some possible inferences that can be drawn from the study of the accumulated material. It will pursue what can be known about this culture from the resources at hand. One example of the direction this chapter will go is to consider the body positions in the graves. M. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:111) states that from the work at a cemetery at Azor, in one context of twenty-five graves together, all the bodies were buried in the same manner.

Excavators indicated that each grave was an individual burial. The arms and bodies were extended and each one was interred with their heads toward the east. Though the eastern orientation is uniform at this site, the more typical method is to inter the body with the head to the west. Suggestions as to the significance of these details will be made. It will be seen in this study that inconsistency of customs is fairly common among the Philistine-influenced tombs.

Chapter five is about grave contents. This discussion will add to the study by showing the variety of influences upon the formative Philistine culture. The process of intercultural exchange will again be evident. One example of the material presented in this chapter will be mourning figurines found at Tell Aitun. T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992: 200) indicates that these figurines may reveal a cultural link to their Mycenaean counterparts on the Greek mainland at Perati and other locations. Suggestions can be made based upon an evaluation of these figurines and other artifacts regarding Philistine concepts of death and afterlife.

Like the loom weights found at Ashkelon, the mourning figurines would in a way provide a stronger connection to cultural identity than the pottery record. It would seem

this facet of the communities' expression would be less debatable due to its connection to the cult. This chapter will offer some of these suggestions as well as cautions regarding such conclusions about Philistine culture in light of the tomb material available.

Chapter six confronts the well-known and often disputed aspect of Philistine burials—that of anthropoid clay coffins. Drawing from the efforts of Professor T. Dothan, and building on the work of scholars over the last century, this chapter will identify the earliest forms of these coffins. It will trace the origin, spread, and use of this burial practice, which is evident in several Canaanite sites. The two basic types of anthropoid coffins will be presented and some implications will be suggested. Pottery and other items found in the tombs where these coffins were located will be included in the discussion with some possible parallels being drawn from site to site.

Chapter seven addresses literary implications. Unfortunately, there are very little Philistine materials to consider at this point. The biblical sources will provide insights into aspects of the subject at hand. Some textual complications will be discussed in order to clarify this particular aspect of the project. This chapter cautions against drawing conclusions about Philistine culture exclusively from the literary record.

In the Old Testament hints of Philistine beliefs concerning death and afterlife may be traced. Even though the writers were not Philistine and not writing from a pro-Philistine perspective, these insights can be highlighted, brought out in the paper, and become very beneficial for the study. In the Assyrian Annals, Philistine political alignments from certain periods during the Iron Age can be seen. This chapter will explore some of the implications related to burials that can be suggested from the study

of sources such as these. It will also caution against making too many inferences from the lack of this kind of material.

One example to be considered from the Old Testament is 2 Kings 1 where King Ahaziah sent a messenger to inquire of the Baal of Ekron. He was near death and wanted to know whether he would recover or not. The question raised then is, did the Philistines practice divination? To what degree did necromancy play a part in their concepts regarding the dead? The literary record here implies they were involved the cult of the dead. This type of literary material will be presented in a limited fashion because the textual considerations could quickly take the discussion beyond the scope of the paper.

Chapter 7 seeks to identify ways the Philistines may have thought about death or afterlife through hints gleaned from the literary sources. The procedure followed in this chapter will be to identify a burial custom from one of the previous chapters, and cite literature that addresses the practice pictured in the material record. Both the literary sources and the material records are called upon to provide insights to the study at this point. The biblical material will provide the bulk of the response to the archaeological data. Implications from the Ugaritic texts and Mesopotamian sources will add insights to the comprehension as well.

Challenging questions will be dealt with, such as: What can be known about these subjects, sacred to any human society, through giving consideration to the Philistine material available? Are there evidences of rites of passage, or ancestor veneration? Are there any hints from this record as to Philistine belief about the afterlife? How did they cope with death? Were mourning figurines cathartic in nature? To what degree may the

material data reflect a Philistine cult of the dead? These are questions to which there may not always be conclusive answers, yet some kind of image can be described.

These implications made from the material record may allow for a clearer picture of Philistine funerary practices and beliefs to be envisioned. It is the goal of this chapter to allow these records to speak from their own context, while being cognizant of the accompanying limitations. Some connections between Philistine culture and the burial data may never be achieved in certain areas of this study due simply to the tenuous nature of the material.

The eighth chapter is a conclusion to the paper. It provides a summary of the research done and seeks to draw together any loose ends remaining. It will emphasize again the purposed solution to the research problem presented at the beginning of the paper. It will reiterate the various options identified as alternative resolutions to the problem of the Iron Age Canaanite peoples called Philistines and the possible evidence of burial customs and beliefs about the afterlife.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has set out to present some of the complications and problems confronted when attempting to link the Philistines of the Old Testament with any of the

burials and burial sites found thus far from Iron Age Canaan/ancient Israel. It has defined the limitations of such a pursuit and set the course for the rest of the paper. The symbiotic model, which will be an essential part of the material presented herein, has been introduced and illustrated with a number of examples.

This chapter has briefly mentioned some of the key scholars within the relevant fields of study associated with the Philistines of the Old Testament. Since the study of burials is an important and informative aspect of cultural studies, many scholars have provided insights into the general subject. They have offered different opinions and interpretations that have often contributed to a lively and exciting debate about the burial data related to the Philistines. The diverse nature of these burials has prohibited any consistent agreement on the evidence.

The contextual method presented here allows the subject to be studied within the field of study where there is a lot of variation. This paper is done with the understanding that certain limitations exist and that there are a number of different opinions regarding the interpretations of the material presented. There is not a large volume of sources available regarding Philistine burials. It is possible to trace the bits and pieces of available data to render at least a limited concept of Philistine burials, customs, and the communities associated with them. This chapter has also attempted to state how this pursuit will be accomplished. As a part of the solution being offered, it has also presented some of the ways scholars have dealt with the issue of Philistine burials up to this point in Philistine studies. Subsequent chapters will seek to build on what has been done, and provide new insights related to the data to be presented.

## CHAPTER 2

### *MOVING TOWARD A SOLUTION*

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one outlined some of the problems encountered when pursuing Philistine burial customs. This chapter will suggest methods by which solutions may be sought. Examples of problems and some of these solutions will also be given in order to provide additional elucidation to the material presented. The more clearly the problem can be articulated, the better it may be understood and therefore better solved.

Part of the response to the problems presented in this chapter will include a brief section on the significance of terminologies related to the Philistines and a study of burials within a Philistine context. It is important that the terminologies and concepts used throughout the paper be understood in the way they have been intended. In light of this supposition it seems necessary to take sufficient space in the paper to allow for these clarifications. This is especially true in an area of study such as the one presented here, where there have been some very divergent viewpoints espoused. Once these clarifications have been made the chapter can then more readily proceed toward its goal.

## 2.2 SOLVING THE PROBLEM

Several techniques will be applied toward the resolution of the research problem presented above. But beyond every technique lies the motivating purpose. Why are burials studied at all? Davis (1988:181) affirms that a goal of tomb excavation should be to “recover all information related to a burial setting for the purpose of establishing that kind of cultural model which will include historical, anthropological, geological, architectural, social, and religious concerns.” Essentially the method and driving purpose behind the study of burials should be to employ every applicable discipline in order to reconstruct a representation that most closely resembles the actual society being considered. Davis’ six areas will find their way into the three components of the biocultural profile presented below.

Bloch-Smith (1992:15-16) mentions that the tendency in the study of Iron Age death and burial has been to focus on either the biblical or the archaeological material, which in the end renders a lopsided representation of the cultures under consideration. This asymmetrical perspective may be avoided, she emphasizes, by meshing the two disciplines in order to get a clearer picture of the true nature of people and communities being studied. This paper seeks to incorporate this “synthetic” approach by including chapters on the archaeological data and one on the literary implications relevant to the subject matter being presented.

Every pursuit of a burial and its contents should be supported by this underlying purpose of clarifying the historical picture. Without this purpose the end result may

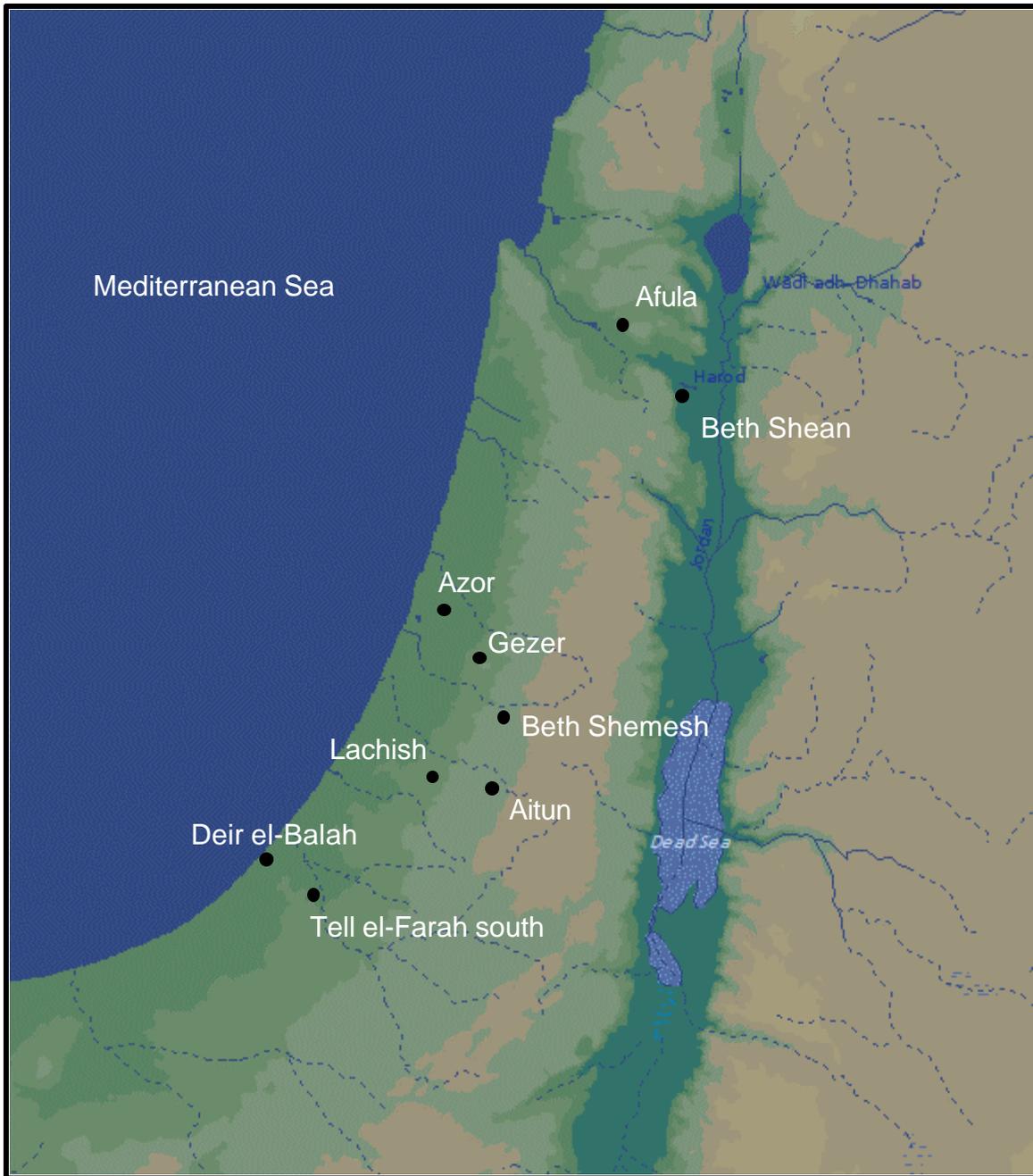
become more of a caricature than a true to life depiction of the actual community of people. This paper attempts to give attention to as many of the various disciplines involved in the field of burial research as possible with the goal of properly portraying this particular group of ancient peoples. The author is building on an MTh dissertation (Fugitt 2000) done with Unisa on the origin and identity of the Philistines, a summary version of which appeared in *Old Testament Essays* (Fugitt 2002: 368-380).

In the following pages one of the techniques presented to help accomplish this underlying goal is the biocultural profile mentioned above. This profile takes its cue from Sheridan's work at St. Stephens (1999:574-611). A diagram of the profile is provided to help illustrate the possible benefits of its use. In the study of the Philistines there are several areas where the effectiveness of Sheridan's original outline will be restricted. Some of these areas will be included anyway so that new material may be added to the equation as it becomes available. Preliminary suggestions will be made regarding concepts of the afterlife based on the graves and associated material to be presented in the paper.

For the purpose of clarification this section of the paper will include a map relevant to the study at hand. It will illustrate the placement of burials in their locations, along with the accompanying time frame. Maps are helpful for a more thorough understanding of the problem being discussed and assist in the comprehension of certain aspects of the solutions being purposed. This information will be based on the widely accepted and fairly solid chronology of Philistine arrival and settlement in Canaan that has already been established in previous publications. This chronology places them along the

Levantine coast in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century BC around 1175, at a critical time of transition for many people groups throughout the entire Mediterranean world and beyond.

It should be noted that the selected sites identified on the map below are not all within the area typically known as Philistia. It is worth reiterating that these sites are not from the original settlement of phase one Philistine in Canaan. Most of the sites are selected for inclusion in the discussion due to the presence of phase two Philistine bichrome pottery, and it should be added that some of these sites had very small amounts of this evidence found in their contexts. This fact places these settlements slightly later than those of phase one, yet still within the Iron I period which is the time targeted for exploration here. This bit of knowledge not only helps with a comprehension of the map, but also in the entire thesis being presented in this project.



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- ***Selected sites with Philistine or associated influences found in burials (13<sup>TH</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC)***

**Plate 2.** *Map of Iron I burials containing Philistine influence*

### **2.3 CLARIFYING THROUGH EXAMPLES**

This section will provide examples from the archaeological record available through the efforts of excavators and researchers. These examples are intended to illustrate the stated problem; the lack of definite Philistine burial information. In her defining 1982 publication on the Philistines and their material culture T. Dothan states, “as yet no burial grounds in any of the main Philistine cities, such as Ashdod, have been explored:” (Dothan 1982:252). To date this problem is still present in Philistine studies.

Nonetheless, Dothan includes sections on Philistine burials and burial customs in two major books and other articles, and affirms that there is enough evidence in other burials that some concept of Philistine burial customs can be known (Dothan and Cohn 1994:70).

It may be true that to this day no cemeteries have been found at the major Philistine sites, but there is enough evidence in the material data that burial customs can be discussed in their contexts. Curiously, Philistine burial customs are riddled with variety. An example of this variety according to T. Dothan and Cohn (1994:70) is in the method of interments. This subject will be discussed in depth in the next chapter concerning burials and tombs.

Bloch-Smith (1992:55) also acknowledges that though Philistia has been identified “Philistine burial practices are not yet know.” She does, however, provide extensive data from sites located throughout the eastern Mediterranean coast that contain clear evidence of Philistine influence. This influence will be identified here by the presence of Philistine material culture. The results do not establish an unquestionable

Philistine burial pattern; yet certain trends may be identified. Once again it can be seen that solid answers are elusive due to the lack of a clear, distinct, and traceable pattern of burials and practices from the major Philistine sites.

These are simply two brief examples of how scholarship has dealt with the problem of confidently identifying Philistine burials. This is not the first conundrum with which Philistine research has had to struggle and it will not be the last. It seems that the material evidence will provide a bit more exactness to the solution. To reiterate the procedure of this paper in light of these struggles; it will focus on burials where Philistine influence is identifiably present within the burial context, keeping in mind that at times the percentage of bichrome pottery may be meager.

#### **2.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TERMINOLOGY**

The purpose of this section is to define specific terminologies used in the paper. The word “Philistine” itself must be understood in the context of this paper in order to make sense of the discussion. Without delving into too much detail regarding the origins of the Philistines at this point, the term is used here to define a group of Sea Peoples with an Aegean background living in Canaan during the Iron I Age. Though scholars are not unified at this juncture, much has been published supporting an Aegean connection.

Stager (1995:332) points out that the archaeological documentation has within recent years begun to reflect this Aegean/Mycenaean origin. M. Dothan (1989:65) cites possible linguistic connections to the same origin.

The evidence linking the Philistines with the Aegean supports what the later prophets perceived as the regions of Philistine origin. Amos 9:7 and Jeremiah 47:4 both refer to the Philistines as having come from Caphtor, which is usually identified as the island of Crete. It seems the bulk of these Philistines were settled in the biblical areas along the Canaanite coast around 1175 BC by Pharaoh Ramesses III. This settlement follows the conflict on and along the Nile River in which the Sea Peoples were forced to withdraw their bid for the control of Egypt. Other minor settlements may have occurred before or after this time. T. Dothan (1989:8) provides more information regarding these confrontations.

Images of the battles with Egypt were recorded by Egyptian artisans on wall reliefs at Ramesses III's mortuary temple located at Medinet Habu in Upper Egypt, in which one of the people groups depicted there are called "Prst." These are the people now identified as the "Philistines" and linked to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Thus, the term Philistine in this paper is referring to a migratory group of peoples who settled in stages over a long period of time on the southwestern Canaanite coast, and not a group of indigenous peoples emerging from the Late Bronze Age and bearing the name Philistine.

Once settled in these coastal sites, which were to become a five-fold enclave of Philistine civilization, they developed a distinctive culture all their own. This culture has been identified archaeologically by the characteristic bichrome black and red painted pottery that seems to be somewhat an eclectic ware, reminiscent of the monochrome

Mycenaean predecessor. The archaeological evidence shows the Philistines as a possible civilizing influence in their historical arena. In their description of the Palace systems of the Aegean, Wallbank and Taylor (1954:125) depict a people well advanced in artistic expression and in other areas. This picture differs from that once found in modern definitions such as *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Guralnik 1974:561) stating that "Philistine" meant "indifferent to cultural values" and "lacking in culture."

It is important to note that at the major Philistine sites there is a traceable transition from the Mycenaean to the Philistine pottery as this relatively new Levantine culture changes, develops, and assimilates external cultural aspects into its own. It would seem to lend credibility to the identification of a site as "Philistine" then when both styles are represented in a single location. Killebrew (1998:393) emphasizes that it was in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the connection was made between the pottery of Mycenaean IIIc:1b type and that of mainland Greece.

Used in relation to burials in this paper, the term Philistine will refer to those burials where there is evidence of Philistine material culture, namely the characteristic pottery just defined. As will be stressed throughout the paper, caution should be exercised in relating the material evidence to a people. Stager (1995:332) refers to the "Tower of Babel syndrome" in which archaeology denies cultural change as taking place from within a particular society and sees it as occurring as a result of outside influences. A type of "pan-Babylonianism," as it has been called (Boshoff 1994:123; Von Soden 1994: 157n, 178n), sees all cultural innovations as beginning at "Babylon" or whatever location and then spreading elsewhere. This evidence is then traced in the archaeological

record. Stager warns against falling into the trap of simply associating “pots” with “people.” This paper attempts to heed this caution, and will echo its implications throughout as the various sites and burials are considered.

The term “Canaanite” is a term that at times may refer to an ethnic group of indigenous peoples inhabiting the land along the eastern Mediterranean coast. These peoples were the cultural predecessors to the Phoenicians. The term Canaanite may also be used in this paper as a geographic identification. In this fashion any of the peoples of the ancient Near Eastern land of the Old Testament living in this geographic area may be referred to as being Canaanite dwellers, as they shared in the common setting and many accompanying cultural aspects.

## **2.5 A BIOCULTURAL PROFILE**

Taking a cue from Sheridan’s (1999:574-611) biocultural model in her study of the graves at St. Stephen’s monastery, the profile presented here will serve a similar purpose. Specific elements from Sheridan’s model, such as the liturgical records, are not

applicable since no comparable material is available from a Philistine related context.

This chapter will introduce a type of Philistine biocultural profile using the data from the tombs at the sites under consideration.

Sheridan (1999:578) diagrams the components of her model which are adapted here. Since the material she worked with from the monastery was much later, more identifiable and plentiful, the limitations of the profile presented here are keenly apparent. St. Stephens's is Byzantine, contains some 15,000 skeletal remains, and is a well attested monastery. These facts alone put a comparable pursuit of any kind of Philistine social structure at a disadvantage. Important features that can be incorporated into this study, however, are history, biology, and archaeology. These three aspects form the basis for the profile presented below.

The two aspects of history and archaeology are by far the most familiar to the discussion of the Philistines and have been dealt with in much greater depth in the area of biblical studies. On the other hand, the biological aspect will be more challenging to the research and more limited in its ability to relate any information about Philistine culture. As with every other area of this study, the material presented here will be allowed to speak within its own context. It should be emphasized again that definite links cannot be made on the merit of this particular area of the burial material.

These three interrelated areas compliment each other in their descriptiveness of the burials studied and the communities in which they are found. Sheridan (1999:575) acknowledges in the introduction to her article that one of the purposes of the physical anthropologist is to "look for life in the patterns of death." One of the goals in the pursuit of the cultural profile presented here, which will certainly benefit from this particular

anthropological approach, will also be to become aware of any discernable patterns of belief about life and death through the various features on hand to evaluate.

The limited biological components will be reinforced by the archaeological information through pottery identification at each site presented for evaluation, and other facets that might illustrate cultural affinities and patterns of life. In other words, where the influence of Philistine pottery is found in a burial, the influence of Philistine culture will be assumed. In this way a link is made between the pottery and the people. Other kinds of supporting evidence will be incorporated as it is available. Once this link is made the biological implications may be brought out in the context in which they are found.

The argument can be made that the presence of pottery is not a strong support for the identification of an ethnic or cultural link to the people using the pottery. It is possible that the pottery could be found on site as the result of trade. Finkelstein (1997:224) warns that when labels are applied “we ignore style, status, and trade factors.” Furthermore, he states that ethnicity cannot be clearly defined by pottery in most cases. Theoretically, this argument could be true, and caution should be taken in yielding interpretations of material data. This possibility must be considered when approaching the accumulated evidence from a location before an accurate picture of the community can be imagined.

It should be remembered that T. Dothan (1982:25), the foremost authority on Philistine culture, states that pottery is the “hallmark and chief indicator of Philistine culture.” Betancourt (2000:297) contends that pottery is more useful in tracing origins than many other areas of archaeology, including architecture, metals, figurines, etc. He

reasons that this is true because pottery has no “intrinsic value after it is broken; it is easily recognizable; and it can be studied by regional styles.”

Waldbaum (1966:339) allowed for this consideration in her interpretation of the Tell el-Farah tomb finds. She states, “the unlikelihood of transmission by trade is borne out at Fara by the small quantity of such pottery in the tombs, its total lack on the mound, and absence of any evidence that Fara was a center of trade with the west.” It seems apparent from her comments here that the context of a particular site must determine its interpretation regarding trade, or any other societal aspect for that matter. The material data alone cannot make a determination of what the interpretation should be, though in many cases it is all there is to go on.

In applying this profile to tomb research, materials will logically be limited to those found in burials. Such a presentation should serve a two-fold purpose. First of all it should convey the nature of the cultures under consideration. Secondly it may shed light on their views of the afterlife. This description is given by means of archaeological terminology through identifying articles found in the graves of the deceased.

The linking of pottery to people cannot be done without careful consideration of the historical and geographical context. Emphasizing the disparate mix of ethnic influences in sites labeled as Philistine, Bunimovitz (1990:210-222) warns that “‘Philistine’ pottery is not identical with Philistine population; indeed it should be called ‘Philistia pottery’ not Philistine pottery.” It should be remembered that his work has been done at the border site of Beth Shemesh. A worthy caution is given here that applies to the analysis of Philistine related materials perhaps as much or more than any other biblical culture. The mistakes of arriving at premature conclusions and making impulsive judgments

should be avoided. Such conclusions may be based upon either insufficient data or skewed eagerness. This word of caution however does not mean that certain obscure areas of this cultures' existence cannot be uncovered and reveal ancient life as it was, from the context in which it is found today. A painful fact of this particular area of academic pursuit is that the context does not always provide the researcher with sufficient data to make a full, complete and totally confident statement in every area of the material to be presented.

In this type of contextual study the facts are presented, as they stand, for consideration. If they are presented fairly, they will be allowed to speak for themselves. The mute areas of archaeology can come alive from the sands, wadis, and tombs of the ancient past and communicate bits and pieces of community life and reflect the ancient societies' way of thinking in many respects. Such a contextual approach seems to be the best solution to what would otherwise be an ambiguous area of research.

Philistine bichrome pottery has become the distinguishing characteristic of this unique culture, but as stated above there are some cautions regarding the universal attribution of the presence of this pottery in a site to a definite ethnic identity. Schloen (2002:online) has made the case that a few non-Philistine potters could have created the pottery that became scattered around ancient Canaan without representing an established culture of their own.

Schloen suggests that an argument can be made in favor of evidence of other cultural elements or customs that might be less reproducible by non-Philistine peoples. He cites the Mycenaean loom weights found at Ashkelon as a good example of this method of tracing ethnic identity. They are simply pinched in the middle and seem to be

a more everyday expression of cultural experience. As far as a cultural affinity, he states they are similar to loom weights found at Mycenaean and Aegean sites.

In the establishing of the cultural profile for the study of Philistine burials, this paper will consider the available factual data, which will typically draw the research to the sites where there is evidence of the characteristic pottery of the Philistines. While burials and remains from any time throughout the six hundred year Levantine history of the Philistines may be considered, it is understood that the earlier material would more likely give distinctive qualities that would have best represented the original Philistines. The earlier material will be the concentration of this paper, since it seeks to focus on clarifying Philistine culture through the study of associated burials.

Regarding the biological component of the profile being presented, there are skeletal remains to be considered that will strengthen the weakest corner of this three-sided construct. In the current excavation at Tell es-Safi, now confidently identified as Gath of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, dig directors Aren Maier and Carl Ehrlich (2002:online) report having found a destruction layer they have dated to the late eight century. Interestingly, one of the possible answers to who may have burned the city is suggested by excavator as the Arameans, as is seen in 2 Kings 12:18. This correlates with the biblical picture of the city of Gath, which is seen as diminishing in significance after this time in history.

Skeletal remains have been located under some of the collapsed buildings of this destruction layer at Gath. This destruction appears to have been the work of aggressors who destroyed the city and burned it to the ground. Excavators hope to be able to have DNA analyses conducted on some of these individuals, which would be observably

advantageous to any aspect of Philistine studies. Though this “accidental burial” (Davis 1988:190) cannot be considered a customary burial site, such testing could shed light on the ethnic connections of the people living in Gath at the time, and could allow for a fuller comprehension of the degree to which acculturation had evolved at that time in history, and thus supporting the symbiotic model discussed at length in the previous chapter of this paper.

Davis (1988:190) applies the use of this term “accidental burials” to be included in the discussion. He states that accidental burials are usually the result of an earthquake or military activity. The apparent Assyrian destruction of Ashdod during the Iron II period, leaving behind a mass grave of over 45 individuals, could also be classified in this way. These types of “burials” do not convey information regarding burial customs. Whatever the cause of death may have been, however, as long as there are human remains that can be studied, the results could contribute to the biological aspect of the profile being presented.

It is theoretically possible to trace some of the life patterns through the examination of skeletal remains. Paleopathology can be useful in the process of studying these remains to help verify ancient diseases and causes of death. Cultural anthropology studies many of the same materials in order to determine possible ethnic connections, origins and related elements. During the dig at Azor, excavator Moshe Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:113) submitted skeletal remains of five individuals to anthropologist Denise Ferembach for her consideration and analysis. The results of her tests will be thoroughly discussed in chapter four on the care and treatment of bodies. It is included

here as an example of the type of material that will be classified as a part of the biological aspect of the biocultural profile.

Lange (2002:76) draws on the knowledge of forensic anthropologist, Ashley McKeown, when she reports that bubonic plague, malaria and tuberculosis all leave their “signatures in mitochondrial DNA.” McKeown is working at the 17<sup>th</sup> century American site at Jamestown, Virginia. This type of information could supply helpful information to the study of the ancient Philistines. This DNA information may be useful in the analysis of the skeletal remains uncovered at the sites under consideration.

# ***A PHILISTINE BIOCULTURAL PROFILE OF LIMITED SCOPE***

## ***ARCHAEOLOGY***

- Artifacts
- Site identification
- Burial/Tomb types
- Regional varieties

## ***HISTORY***

- Literary records
- Implications of artistic expression
- Cultural influences and parallels
- Origins and Identity

## ***BIOLOGY***

- Diet
- Stature
- Demography
- Paleopathology and causes of death

**Plate 3.** *Diagram of Biocultural Profile*

## **2.6 PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON CONCEPTS OF AFTERLIFE**

Somewhere along the way of burial research, interpretations must be offered. What motivated these ancient peoples to make burial offerings? Why did they bury in certain kinds of graves, or treat the bodies in certain ways, or locate the tombs the way they did? These questions, and more, are naturally raised as the research approaches these delicate and subjective areas of the study. Because of the sensitivity of these kinds of issues, interpretations and suggestions will be made cautiously and deferentially.

Given the nature of this facet of human existence, it is doubtful that there were too many haphazard things done at the time of interment. Everything done had significance. Every item placed in the burial had been important to someone, whether to the one interred or someone closely connected to them. Such elements may or may not have held cultic significance for the entire community, but it will be argued that they were significant at that time in history to someone involved. Guided by this supposition, therefore, this research is done with careful consideration to as many relevant aspects of the burials in focus as possible.

The implications given in this paper pertaining to concepts of the afterlife will follow established patterns set by scholars in a variety of historical venues. As stated above it is accepted that items were placed in tombs for specific reasons and rituals were performed out of the sincere belief in an existence beyond this life. Burial offerings will

be seen as significant and will help illuminate the understanding of thoughts about afterlife of the communities under analysis.

Brichto (1974:4) lays a foundation to an understanding of the mindset of ancient peoples regarding death and afterlife by citing the Coulanges (1955:15) model which essentially may be summarized as follows:

- 1) The soul (or life-spirit) remained with the body in its burial place after death.
- 2) The deceased was dependent on their descendants to supply them with a proper burial and with food offerings, which would in turn keep their spirit happy.
- 3) If the spirit became unhappy due to ill treatment, it would in turn afflict the living.
- 4) Therefore, death was to be feared and the dead were revered to the point of being worshipped as divinity.

Brichto cites this type of domestic religion as the “constituent principle of the ancient family,” which seems to indicate his view that this pattern would form a foundation upon which the ancient peoples would have established their practices of burial. The beliefs would then have become evident in the various principal elements of the burial, such as pottery, burial types and offerings, and so forth. His purpose is to view this model alongside the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. He acknowledges the biblical records only give limited information regarding the subject at hand. The “visible tip of an iceberg” as he calls it, is all that can be known from the literary material, while the largest part of the iceberg is left to conjecture.

As with any ancient peoples the search for Philistine beliefs regarding death and the afterlife is also limited. Perhaps much of what will be put forth in this paper will be the tip of the Philistine iceberg; yet the tip will provide impressions about what lies beneath the surface. As a part of working toward a solution this project will suggest some of

these possible impressions and interpretations that can be made based upon the visible elements of Philistine culture.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has suggested solutions to issues raised in the discussion regarding Philistine burial practices in their cultural context. Methods used for clarification include the mapping of selected burial sites where Philistine pottery has appeared within the context of the graves. This chapter has introduced the long and tedious process of searching through all the minute details of the burial records. The search focuses on locating identifiable patterns from the burial material. This chapter has also introduced the method of searching for those distinctive practices that may appear within a Philistine context and that may be especially revealing about this particular group of Old Testament peoples.

A discussion regarding some terms that are potentially misunderstood in the dialogue has also been included. Other terms and concepts will be dealt with throughout

this paper, most of which will be defined at the point they are presented. A biocultural profile is one such concept presented and explained. The author's version of Sheridan's model has been adapted for the study of Philistine burials. It was pointed out that some of the areas included in Sheridan's model were not used in the profile presented here. Reasons were also given as to why these areas could not be included in this specific study.

Finally, some preliminary concepts have been presented on the thoughts of death and afterlife. The greater part of the discussion on this subject will appear in the various chapters as the evidence is presented for evaluation. As a part of the solution to the research problem of identifying Philistine burial customs and what can be known about this ancient culture based on this information, each chapter will include some insights on the purpose of certain customs enacted or materials used.

Chapter eight on funerary rites and their implications will deal more specifically with what might be known about this specific subject. Approaching that chapter will be most productive as the result of working through the material preceding it, and after attempting to comprehend the material piece by piece as it leads up to that point. This present chapter has hopefully laid out the course for that evolution to take place.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### ***BURIALS AND TOMBS***

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The burials in Iron Age I Canaan were basically of two types. Individuals were either interred by inhumation or the remains were cremated. Holloway (1992:42) indicates that the practice of cremation has been traced in 12<sup>th</sup> century burials in various cultures throughout the central Mediterranean. By far the most common type of burial was inhumation, with cremation only appearing in rare instances. Within the Philistine context, in fact, there has been only one occurrence of cremation identified. This single instance will be discussed below. Based upon current archaeological data, this pattern seems to be traceable across all cultures living in this area during Iron I.

The symbiotic model, which will resurface repeatedly throughout this paper, will be traceable here. From this symbiotic perspective, common practices among cultures will be highlighted. One of the ways this model can be seen is in the types of burials and tombs communities were using during this period of Old Testament history. Zevit (2001:116) recognizes that “lines can be drawn” separating the cultures of Canaan and Israel, though he acknowledges that the line is “broken” through what he calls an

‘admixture of population’ and regular cultural exchange and contact. The same principle applies to the relationship between these cultures and the Philistines of that period.

This chapter seeks to explore the various types of burials and tombs associated with Philistine material remains. As stated in the previous chapter, this facet of Philistine burials is one in which there is visible diversity. Suggested interpretations to some of the customs described in this chapter will be offered as the data is explored. Bloch-Smith (1992:18) cautions against assuming there was a religious motivation behind every tomb type and location. She asserts that any number of reasons, some known and some possibly unknown, could have influenced the use of a certain type of grave at a particular time and place.

Bloch-Smith (1992:18) cites political, cultural, and geological causes as examples of the various motivations for tomb type selection. The argument presented is practical in nature and applicable to the study of any culture. The geological motivation is applicable to the study here, especially as the discussion turns to the rock-cut chamber tombs. These rock-cut tombs were usually carved in the softer stone found in certain areas and at certain levels. Also, in light of their Aegean origin, it may be envisioned that the Philistines were settled in similar maritime type surroundings to their homeland. Perhaps having established their Canaanite version of an Aegean settlement along the southern Levantine coast, it is plausible to think they would have also sought similar geological contexts for the burial of their dead. Thus, the stage is set for the continued dialogue concerning the origin of the stone-hewn tombs.

More information will be offered for discussion on this in the section on chamber tombs, but suffice it to say at this point that there were several similarities in Philistine

influenced rock-cut tombs in Canaan and those of an Aegean setting. There were also significant differences in some of the shapes and features of these tombs that will be presented and discussed. It will be supported in this chapter that these differences specifically pertain to geological distinctions between the two contexts under consideration.

It will be argued that particular distinguishing characteristics can be known about the nature of a culture by examining the types of burials they used. The variety of types already mentioned, and others, will be emphasized and discussed in this section of the paper. The value of identifying tomb types also assists in the clarification of the cultural affinities of the Philistines. This will become evident as comparable types are traced around the Mediterranean world. The data gained through such an observation is especially helpful since burial and funerary customs appear to represent one of the more static facets of human life. Waldbaum (1966:334) has called burial customs one of the more “conservative elements” of societal existence. The unchanging nature of some of these practices can be observed in the burials under consideration here and may be fairly identifiable from one location to the next.

Similarities as well as differences may be traceable in these types. While the differences help to distinguish cultures, the similarities will affirm the symbiotic model. This symbiosis, or sharing of customs such as simple burials or chamber tombs, will be traceable as the parallels to other cultures and their influences are disclosed in the presentation of the data. This paper does not intend to be a comparison of cultures. Rather, its focus is on the Iron Age I burials showing Philistine influence. It is next to

impossible, however, to study the Philistines without touching on other cultures to some degree.

For this reason material will be presented in this paper from other cultures whose influence is observable in some way on the communities under examination. When studying Philistine burials, that influence will primarily be Egyptian or Mycenaean. Examples and illustrations will be drawn from burial records, and will be offered to help envision discernible customs. These examples will come out of the archaeological milieu of associated Philistine pottery, or some other facet of Philistine culture. Understanding the locations of the sites and burials, and the proximity to major Philistine sites helps in the comprehension of a more accurate picture of Philistine presence and custom. To assist in developing this image, a map is included to illustrate the concentration of the various types of burials with Philistine remains.

### **3.2 SIMPLE BURIALS**

As noted above, the caution concerning ascribing religious motivation for selecting specific tomb types should be remembered in every area of burial studies. Burial practices do not necessarily reflect a philosophical or theological viewpoint in each instance. Consistency is difficult to trace in this regard. In fact, one thing that

appears to be fairly consistent throughout the burials and tombs under consideration in this chapter is that there is no consistency of types. Often the sites explored reveal a variety of burials and interments. Each tomb type and burial to be explored will be presented systematically throughout this chapter. The basic plan is to start with the simplest type of burials and then move to the more complicated tombs. The more complicated burials would be those that would have been more labor intensive, such as the cist burials or especially the rock-cut chamber tombs.

The first type of burial to be analyzed will be simple burials. T. Dothan (1982:55) identifies this form of burial as “plain burial.” These plain or simple inhumations are the most basic type of burials to be discussed, and they comprise the single largest burial type from the contexts being presented in this paper. They are simply pits or depressions dug in the ground as graves. The bodies are usually laid supine or flat on their backs with arms to their sides. Dothan (1982:55) affirms these are the most common types of burials at Iron Age I Azor. A significant number of Philistine graves have been identified there in four different burial settings. Excavator Moshe Dothan (1960:259) communicates from early finds that the Philistines of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and later buried their dead in the same cemeteries as the Canaanites before them. M. Dothan (1961:171) also indicates that the funeral “equipment” was made up mostly of Philistine pottery.

Since this section will focus on simple burials, an important point to pursue would be the motivation behind the use of these burials. The families or communities using this method of burial must have been familiar with some of the other types of burials. It would appear that this type of interment would seem to have been utilized for practical reasons, such as economic, geological, topographical, and perhaps others.

Another important question raised by these burials is one related to the death cult. It seems that there were differences apparent in these variations, not only in practical ways, but also in philosophical and religious ways. The question may be raised regarding a family choosing to bury in a pit grave. Did this family have similar thoughts about the afterlife as the family who utilized the chamber tombs? Some questions that may be left unanswered in this chapter on burials and tombs may find some solutions in the chapter on burial contents. The solutions may not be entirely gratifying, but they will provide a helpful explanation for some of the dilemmas faced in this type of study where such a diverse set of themes are presented for research. Meyers' (1970:3) caution regarding the "somewhat hazardous task" of deriving thoughts about the afterlife from evident practices and archaeological data may be applicable here.

Tell Azor was excavated under the direction of Moshe Dothan beginning in 1958. He (1992:108) has linked this town with the Old Testament through the Septuagint version of Joshua 19:45 as a part of the Tribal allotment of the Danites. Brug (1985:158) states that Azor is important in the study of Philistine burials "for the variety of burial forms." It will be seen throughout this paper that Azor will recur in the discussion at a number of points.

While the bulk of the graves from Azor dated to the Iron Age I period were found to be the simple inhumation, other types of burials were also identified alongside Philistine pottery, or at least within a Philistine type context. Jar burials, cists, and a cremation round out the repertoire of Iron Age I burial types at Azor, making it a site of great variety and contributing to the composite image of Philistine culture. This composite nature has been traced in the pottery record, in the anthropological analyses,

and has been seen in the variety of tomb and burial types. Rather than seeing this composite picture as a hindrance, this paper seeks to present this mixture of customs as an essential element in a further understanding of the Philistines.

Bloch-Smith (1992:152) reports that there were a total of nine pit graves discovered that can be dated between 1100 and 1000 BC. The individuals buried in these graves were all lying flat on their backs with their arms to their sides. Heads were consistently oriented to the west. Significantly, according to Bloch-Smith, the Philistine vessels found in these burials include some examples comparable to those found at Qasile. Qasile is a site identified by T. Dothan (1982:57) as Philistine from its very foundation, with Philistine material evidence appearing with the occupation levels established on virgin soil.

This link to an “original” Philistine settlement lends strength to the notion that pottery and other elements of the material culture can be utilized to some degree to help identify the cultural background of a particular site. Bowls found in these graves were similar to those found at Qasile. The abundance and significance of bowls as grave offerings will be discussed in a later chapter, but here they help grant a possible connection between Philistine culture and Iron Age I residents at Azor. This link would be a beneficial step toward a comprehension of Philistine thought regarding death, burial, and afterlife in the chapter below on funerary rites and their implications.

Another simple grave found at Azor is one that shows possible evidence of an attempt to burn the body. Labeled as burial D9 (Bloch-Smith 1992:153), this pit contained the remains of what Bloch-Smith identifies as an adult brachycephalic male whose grave contains signs of blackened earth. It is reported that the earth was charred

by an apparent fire. This evidence raises some issues and questions to which some suggestions may be offered. It may be suggested that such a practice could be indicative of disease or some condition that caused family members or those responsible for the interment to cleanse the area with fire.

Bienkowski (1982:86) suggests the possibility, in fact, that cremations may have been used at times for hygienic reasons. Heidel (1949:170) interpreted Amos 6:10 as relating to this kind of “protective measure” or a type of decontamination. He states, “Perhaps for sanitary reasons cremation was employed during an epidemic.” It is also possible that burial D9 may be an example of a partial cremation (Bienkowski 1982:86), or an unsuccessful attempt to completely burn the body through cremation.

Cremation was apparently not an unknown concept to the residents at Azor. The D9 grave has been dated, along with the others in its context, to the twelfth and eleventh centuries. The one burial identified positively as a cremation at this location is recognized by Bloch-Smith (1992:178) as being from area D Grave 63. Excavators date this grave to the last half of the eleventh century. Though the dates given could place Grave 63 chronologically later than D9, it reveals that the practice was not unknown to the cultures living in Azor during Iron Age I. Interestingly, Bloch-Smith reports that the date ascribed to Grave 63 was given due to connections with a similar pottery to the styles known from Qasile, a location referred to above that has been identified positively with Philistine culture.

Since Azor has yielded evidence of cremated human remains, it gives confirmation that the practice had been known at this location. Grave 63 will be discussed in greater detail in the section on body treatments. At this point it may be

noted that the individual interred in burial D9 did not seem to receive quite the same treatment as the one in the confirmed cremation example. Those buried in Grave 63 were successfully cremated, buried in a ceramic jar, and protected by a brick structure. Bloch-Smith (1992:53) states that the remains of a 40 to 45 year old male and an adolescent were found in Grave 63. It is illuminating to the discussion here that there were also animal remains found in this grave. Among these animal bones were the remains of pig, which will become significant to the discussion in a future chapter.

If the individual buried in D9 had desired to be cremated, the attempt was unsuccessful and the body was buried in a simple pit. Burial D9 was not left without adequate offerings however. With a Philistine bowl near his chest, various jars, a jug, and other items, this individual was fairly well equipped for his journey to the underworld.

Another intriguing variance in the simple graves at Azor is the appearance of what seems to be the burials of detached skulls. Bloch-Smith (1992:152) states there were seven of these skull burials found. This could possibly represent a particular pattern of cultural expression, especially since there seems to be evidence of similar practices at other sites. If there were just a few of these types of burials it may be argued that the graves had simply been disturbed sometime in antiquity. This subject will be dealt with in a later section on body treatments, and is mentioned here as a part of the simple grave repertoire under consideration.

Another site where simple burials have been found in the context of Philistine pottery is Afula. Afula is located some distance north and east of Azor, as may be seen on the map in chapter two. Afula is far removed from the five major cities of the

Philistines along the coast, and the presence of Philistine pottery in this location gives archaeological substantiation to the concept that they did in fact move out of the areas where the Bible designates their original settlement.

Afula may be associated with the biblical account of Saul's death found in 1 Samuel 31 because of its proximity to the biblical town of Beth Shean. M. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:103) points out that the skirmish described in this chapter between Saul and the Philistines, in which Saul lost his life, was never completely explained. The biblical text mentions that the Philistines hung Saul's body on the wall of Beth Shean in what appears to be an effort to deride the Israelites and to disparage the memory of Saul. Beth Shean will appear again in the chapter on anthropoid coffins.

The question pertaining to Philistine remains in the burials at Afula that has not been answered is: what were the Philistines doing in this area at all? Why do they appear to be dwelling in Beth Shean at this time? It was a significant distance from the Pentapolis and the Philistines seem to have a measure of control in the area. It should also be noted that the archaeological record reflects Philistine influence in this region, as well as Egyptian and others. This Egyptian influence on the tombs at Beth Shean will also be taken up in the chapter on Anthropoid coffins.

Afula, located fairly close to Beth Shean, has provided material evidence of Philistine presence during Iron Age I from its simple burials. Bloch-Smith (1992:152) identified four tombs in a grouping dated to 1150-1050 BC. She specifically cited a jug, excavated from tomb 2, that Trude Dothan suggested may be an early form of Philistine pottery. (Dothan 1982:81)

Another location where Philistine pottery evidence was used to help provide a date for the site is Tell el-Farah. Bloch-Smith (1992:154) states that, in a particular study of the site, approximately 100 simple graves in four different cemeteries were found at this location in the southern Levant. These graves show no continuity as to the number of individuals buried in each interment. Some of the simple graves involved in this study included the remains of single individuals, while others revealed the remains of multiple persons.

### **3.3 CIST BURIALS**

Cist burials are burials in which the body is sheltered by some type of small structure. These structures were built underground and may have been constructed of mud-brick or stones. Such a burial may reflect a development of thought regarding the care of the deceased. Individuals buried in this fashion may have enjoyed a higher position of social standing than others in the same communities buried in simple graves. These burials were far from a stone-cut chamber but seem to be a step above the pit method of interment. The appearance of cist burials could also indicate the availability of materials, time, and personnel necessary to prepare the grave. This development does appear to be slightly a chronological one in instances such as Azor. It seems at times the

development may be more of a theoretical one. In other words, cist graves may be found that pre-date or at least exist alongside the same time period as simple graves in the same sites. For example, Bloch-Smith (1992:157) dates Azor's D76 somewhere between the twelfth to early eleventh century BC, and the nine pit or simple graves at Azor have also been dated to the same time period. The presence of both types may be the result of social distinctions or personal preferences, and is a reminder that burial types can be more complex in some settings than in others. Burial customs reflect certain patterns of ethnic familiarity in addition to other factors.

Azor has provided a generous number of Philistine influenced graves. Excavator M. Dothan (1960:259) describes the grave of a young boy that illustrates the mixture of cultural elements. Philistine pottery was found around the boy's head, while on his throat was found a scarab representing the Egyptian deity Hapi. Bloch-Smith (1992:157-158) reports that the cist graves found at Azor depict a variety of such customs. Burials like D30 reflect a heavy Egyptian influence, yet still included Philistine pottery. One grave, identified as square K10, included various fragments of bowls and curiously it included a large 4-handled storejar.

Grave D76 included Philistine pottery and the cist was built below the ground with unfired brick, while Grave D22 contained a cist built of stone. Once again, as mentioned above, this variation in custom could reflect a development of thought whether personal or cultural, or it could simply be the result of practical causes disallowing a continuity of these burials. That is, they used what they had available to them.

The cist tombs found at Tell el-Farah were similar to those at Azor. At both sites there was a combination of stone built and mud-brick cists. At Farah there were many more stone structures than mud-brick. In fact Bloch-Smith (1992:158) indicates that there was only one mud-brick cist in cemeteries 100 and 200. The rest of the twenty-four burials were constructed of stone. These Iron Age I burials were found by Petrie who excavated the site in the late 1920's.

Bloch-Smith (1992:158) indicates that Petrie reported finding over 400 cist graves at Tell el-Farah that he dated to the twelfth through the ninth centuries BC. Dates ascribed by T. Dothan (1982:29-33) are from the Late Bronze Age through the early Iron Age. Once again, as we have seen at other sites, Dothan has utilized the presence of Philistine and related pottery in these locations in order to arrive at the dates given.

The large number of cist graves at Farah indicates that this type of burial was common there during Iron Age I. Having been dated on the basis of Philistine pottery, it again emphasizes the correlation between material evidence and cultural existence. Understandably, however, there is a difference between using pottery to date a site and using pottery to establish a solid cultural link to that site. It is understood that pottery types changed universally and anyone with economic or trade connections could have acquired it.

In the early excavations of Gezer, Macalister (1965:122) identified elongated rectangular graves in the ground covered with large slabs of stone as a foreign element. He stated that if these graves could not be described as Philistine or "some other foreign tribe" they could not be explained. With this suggestion also came a connection to similar Aegean burial practices. Dever (1974:54-55n.) highlights the fact that a small

percentage of pottery from the Stratum 11 occupation is actually Philistine. He also emphasizes, what has been stressed throughout this paper, that the presence of pottery does not assure the presence of the people who made the pottery.

### **3.4 JAR BURIALS**

Jar burials at Azor were usually protected by a stone or mudbrick frame built around it. Bloch-Smith (1992:160) reports that five out of seventeen were placed in a double jar burial. In these burials two jars laid mouth to mouth contain the human remains. In one such burial the remains of two children were found inside. Bloch-Smith states that these burials were “poorly provisioned.” It would seem that the way in which a burial was provisioned would tell as much about the way in which ancient peoples thought about death and afterlife as any area of burial research.

Even the jar burials that were inadequately supplied showed an ample quantity of bowls and kraters with Philistine painted decoration. This point would seem to indicate the possible Philistine nature of the burial. The idea is that if there were only to be a

small amount of provisions in the burial, they would surely be those that would most closely reflect the community's discernible cultural connection.

### **3.5 CHAMBER TOMBS**

The evidence seems to show that when searching for a chamber tomb the ancient peoples would either reuse a previously carved tomb or carve their own. Dever (1974:23n.) suggests there is evidence that tombs were reused throughout different periods. In some instances caves served a similar purpose for burials. Gonen (1992:126) cites Gezer Cave 9 as an example of a cave burial used in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and later reused in the Philistine period. Cave tombs, as such, are not dealt with separately simply because of the lack of Philistine materials in these burials. Philistine influence, however, was present in the material found in Beth Shemesh cave 11. The offerings included some Philistine bowls and kraters along with two scarabs of Ramesses III and an assortment of Egyptian pottery. Some of these tombs also included "arcosolia," which were an arched niche in the wall used for body storage. Edelstein (1968:195) identifies arcosolia in Iron Age tombs at Tell 'Aitun. The arcosolia, as hinted by Bloch-Smith (1992:41), appear to be related to the bench tombs.

Davis (1988:185) and Bloch-Smith (1992:44) both make reference to Loffreda's (1969) typology of rock-cut tomb plans. The lack of a translation of Loffreda's work required the author to depend on the sources presented here. Bloch-Smith indicates that Loffreda's typology identified eight different types of tombs that become more elaborated through their centuries of use. Loffreda's system is a chronological evaluation, and he identifies types "T," "TT," "C," and "CC," as connected to the Philistines and Canaanites of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The four other types are dated to a later period. Once again the symbiotic model is supported by Loffreda's suggestion that these tomb types occurred in the context of both cultures.

Loffreda's type T tombs are a trapezoidal chamber, type TT are a trapezoidal chamber with smaller chambers added, type C a circular chamber with oval recesses, and type CC a circular chamber with benches. As the material records are explored these tomb types will be envisioned in their settings, along with supporting pottery and other data placing the sites under consideration within the context of Philistine culture.

Bloch-Smith (1992:20) reports that most of the tombs dating from the Iron Age are either a natural cave or were chiseled out of soft rock such as chalk. As far as body treatments and burial offerings are concerned, cave tombs and carved rock tombs are quite comparable. It seems that the ancient peoples would have understandably sought out areas where this softer stone was found to make carving the chamber less arduous. It should be noted that the studies were not limited to burials with evidence of Philistine material culture, thus the findings relate to all Judahite burials dated to the Iron Age.

The entrance to the chamber was made possible through a dromoi or passage way leading from outside into the main room of the tomb. In hilly areas these tombs would be

carved into the side of the hill. When no hills were available, they would dig down into the ground and the dromoi would be supplied with steps for the purpose of descending into the main chamber. Often the main chamber would have smaller rooms or annexes carved off to the sides. Repositories were often provided for the storage of skeletal remains from a previous interment. In some instances annexes were used as repositories. At other times they were either carved under the benches or separately along a wall. Smith and Bloch-Smith (1988:280) indicate that the repository, as an element of the communal burial, appears in the twelfth century and are not Israelite but the result of an outside influence upon these early Iron Age Canaanite cultures. Cooley (1968:92) reported a variation of communal burials from Tel Dothan in which earth was used to cover the previous interments in order to bury the later individuals above the earlier ones.

Benches are carved out of the inside of the chamber, and most of the time appear to have been used as the resting place for the body. These benches are discussed in greater detail in the section devoted to this particular custom. Another feature sometimes seen in chamber tombs are pillars. Tomb 9 at Tell Gezer contains 2 rock pillars in the main chamber. The pillars were left for strength when the chamber was originally carved. This is not the only instance of this type of feature in the rock-cut tombs of what may be Philistine.

One of the Philistine related sites where these kinds of tombs were found is Tell el-Farah. Walbaum (1966:335) compared the rectangular rock-cut tombs from Tell el-Farah with rock-cut tombs in Egypt, Cyprus, and even Canaan before identifying the only tombs comparable in shape at sites in Mycenaean Greece and the Aegean. She (336) indicates that these types of chamber tombs follow Mycenaean migrations and settlement

from one location to the next, until they finally make their way to Canaan and the Philistines.

A key feature Waldbaum uses to link the tombs at Farah with similar ones from Mycenaean/Aegean background was the distinct rectangular shape, as opposed to the variety of shapes found at tombs in other sites. She also cites the benches in the tombs as being a connection that can be made. This connection has been challenged by some. Stiebing (1970:143) argues for the development of the bench tombs from a local Bronze Age predecessor. As these tombs are traced beyond Iron Age I into Iron Age II there appear to be a variety of adaptations of this tomb type to suit local tastes and cultural norms. Stiebing suggests the Philistines adopted the practice after arriving in Canaan in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and then spread its use to other communities under their influence.

Waldbaum's study of two series of rock-cut tombs at Tell el-Farah led her to conclude that the earlier or "900" series was a simpler or cruder version of the later "500" series she identified, along with Petrie, as Philistine. She indicates that this particular type of tomb in its Mycenaean context would have been of a simpler variety than others present there. She identifies the "tholoi" or "beehive" version as having been the tombs of royalty from the early through late Helladic times of Mycenaean opulence. The tholoi are the characteristic Mycenaean constructed tombs with the unique beehive shape.

While T. Dothan (1982:260) agrees with Waldbaum's association between the rock-cut tombs and the Aegean cultures, she does not accept Waldbaum's theory that the 900 series at Farah was the product of an earlier group from the same culture. Brug (1985:153) rejects Waldbaum's suggestions altogether. In fact he states, "there is not a single LB-EI burial in Palestine which is a true copy of a foreign burial." While it may

be true that no burial is an exact replica in every detail of construction, design and apparent maintenance, there are similarities worthy of identification and research.

To further complicate the situation Bloch-Smith (1992:175) indicates that in Tomb 935 from this series, there were fragments of anthropoid coffins and scarabs found. As it will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six, the anthropoid coffins have a limited connection to the Philistines while including obvious affinities to Egypt, which is their place of origin. While it is possible that the 900 series and the 500 series could have been partly contemporary, overall it is apparent that the 900's predate the 500's.

It would be a mistake to assume that migrating cultures would have brought every aspect of their culture with them in a neat reproducible package. Many variables would have influenced the expression of these customs in their new land. Some of these variables may have been available skills in a given community, geological features of the land and even the social expectations these newcomers would have encountered from within their new neighborhoods. The archaeological data has consistently revealed that the Philistines, like any other group of migrating peoples in a new land, adapted to their surroundings by quickly acquiring many of social expressions of those around them.

The geological concern is worth addressing at this point. A difference between the 500 series tombs and those paralleled in the Aegean and Mycenae are the variations in the stepped dromoi or the passageway that led from the entrance of the tomb to the main chamber. Waldbaum (1966:338) points out that the earlier "Mycenaean" 900 series was constructed in an area where the topography is hilly rather than flat. She states this is typical for the similar tombs in Mycenaean locations. This could account for the stepped passage as opposed to the non-stepped passage. In the Canaanite locations where the

stepped dromoi are found, the steps in the tombs would have been a practical feature to allow entrance into the tomb. On the other hand, where the tomb could be dug directly into the side of a hill, steps became an unnecessary phase in the construction process.

There are also variances in construction among the tombs themselves. Etan Ayalon (1985: 54) states that tombs from Iron Age I Tell Aitun containing material evidence of the Philistine culture have a number of observable variations. Aharoni (1982:183) states that petrographic analyses have shown the Philistine pottery was brought to the site from the coastal areas. This fact provides evidence for the picture of the multifaceted cultural expressions visible in many of the sites under consideration. An example of the variety of tomb construction is found in a chamber tomb at Aitun. This chamber, labeled tomb C1, shows signs of having a new room added to it after its initial completion (Bloch-Smith 1992:171). Zevit (2001:244ff) draws attention to the “creature” heads in the shape of predatory birds apparently guarding a later tomb. He (2001:147n.) admits, however, that his comparison of this characteristic to Philistine tombs showed no parallels.

In addition to the rock-cut tombs identified by Waldbaum in the various locations mentioned above, Sevin (1994:58-67) has identified rock-cut tombs as far away as Urartu. The tomb layout of those Sevin described are different from those appearing in Iron Age I Canaan. The fact they appear in this location, however, indicates a wide-spread use of the rock-cut sort of tombs.

### 3.6 BENCH TOMBS

As indicated above, bench tombs are related to the chamber tombs in that they were often carved out of the soft rock in the tomb interior. These were added by carving out the existing structure to allow for benches along the perimeter of the cave. The chiseled benches would then be used as resting places for the deceased. Interestingly, Lesko (2000:1770) indicates that the word “bench” in reference to burials is “mastabas” in Arabic. Mastabas are a well-known Egyptian tomb type. Lesko (2000:1770) points out that mastabas first appeared in Egypt as tombs for the more prominent residents. It would seem that not every Egyptian had their own mastaba. Though borrowing the name from the Egyptian version, variations exist between these and the Canaanite style.

A good bit of discussion has surrounded the subject of bench tombs. At least some of this attention has been given to the development of these tombs throughout the areas of the eastern Mediterranean. Are they the result of Mycenaean influence, as Waldbaum has suggested, or as argued by Stiebing, are they an adaptation of indigenous practices? Perhaps they are the result of a combination of influences.

This type of tomb was one of the most commonly used throughout the area and was also one of the most lasting practices in burial customs. Gonen (1992:126) indicates that benches in the tombs were common in the Late Bronze Age. Its features were also some of the most durable. A study of the data seems to reveal a good amount of consistency in these tombs as well as body treatments and other funerary concerns throughout the Iron Age. Research basically affirms the practical durability of these

types of tombs. This durability seems to be evident both in regard to the structure of the chambers themselves, and in the concept of this type of interment. In other words, the ancient people were partial to this type of burial and the system and structure seems to have worked well for them.

It is logical that such a tomb could have housed several generations of a family. The practical use of this type of tomb is evident at this point, and the logical development becomes visible. For reasons discussed in the next section of the paper, multiple burials either became desirable or necessary, and the bench tombs with their lasting structure and beneficial features could be used for generation after generation.

### **3.7 MULTIPLE BURIALS**

Certain aspects of multiple burials may become indicators of cultural affinities and social customs when carefully examined. It is logical to suggest that multiple burials may be attributed to family groups. Bloch-Smith (1992:26) states, “the multiple burial units may be categorized as family interments on the basis of sex and relative ages of individuals present.” Gonen (1992:126) provides information from Gezer that shows

this practice in a Late Bronze context. Eighty-nine skeletons from a 14<sup>th</sup> century occupation level have been identified as all belonging to a “single family.” This evidence of the family-centered burial site highlights the durability as well as the desirability of this type of burial.

Practically speaking, families would not have to search for a tomb, or carve a new tomb every time one was needed. With the family tomb in use those tasks were eliminated or at least minimized. At most, the family may have to rearrange older remains to make room for the new interment. From a less practical or technical perspective, the family tombs would have been desirable because they would have kept the family together. Much like families in contemporary rural American culture tend to have certain cemeteries they use for burials; the ancient peoples may have shared some of the same attitudes about the remains of their family members.

Waldbaum (1966:335) cites examples of these tombs that best lent themselves to communal or family burials. She also compares the chamber tombs of Tell el-Farah with others throughout the Mediterranean world. She affirms that multiple burials were less common among the Late Minoan period chamber tombs. In her pursuit the multiple burials became an evidence of commonality among the people of the ancient Near East. The link to Mycenaean culture is especially visible.

Scheepers (Scheepers and Scheffler 2000:33) cites a tomb at Dan, the former Laish according to Judges 18:29, as an example of this Mycenaean connection. The tomb is dated to the Late Bronze Age. It is not only an example of a communal tomb, but it was replete with burial offerings. Scheepers (Scheepers and Scheffler 2000:34) reports that 30% of the pottery was of Mycenaean origin. This seems to indicate a significant

level of Mycenaean influence, which, as Scheepers states, is traceable in Canaan throughout this period of history.

Adding to that, the presence of this type of pottery in general, and specifically this assemblage in the tomb at Dan, exemplifies the process of symbiosis and intercultural exchange taking place among these ancient societies during this disruptive and transitional time. It also highlights the cultural link between Mycenae and specific Levantine settlements during this period. One question to be pursued within the scope of this paper has to do with any possibly detectable patterns regarding single versus multiple burials. The burials explored are from Iron Age I and show Philistine influence. It will seek possible solutions to the presence of single/multiple burials that appear in a variety of interments.

Initially there seems to be no pattern to the single versus multiple burial scenario. Multiple burials occur in pits as well as in the context of anthropoid coffins. A significant example of multiple burials can be seen in the Tell el-Farah evidence. The stone built cist tombs found there contained what appeared to be the remains of as many as six persons. Yisraeli (1993:443) reports that tombs in the 500 series contain a large number of Philistine vessels, providing the Philistine connection. Tombs 552 and 562 are noteworthy because of the anthropoid coffins located in context.

For now it would be helpful to know that these were the burials used to make room for new interments. After the process of decomposition had completed, the bones would be relocated, usually with a larger number of previous remains, to these secondary burials. Meyers (1970:11) suggests this period of “decarnation” may be approximately 8 months. He cites the deaths of Saul’s descendants, found in 2 Samuel 21, as an example.

As it can be imagined, in time these secondary burials would accumulate quite an amount of skeletal material.

For this paper, a difference between multiple and communal burials will be distinguished at this point. At times this may only be a matter of terminology, but it may distinguish between different contexts at times also. Bloch-Smith (1992:175) in referring to tomb 532 at Tell el-Farah, mentions that apparently in somewhat typical fashion bodies were laid on the benches in pairs. This would represent the multiple burial identified here. Simply, the multiple burial is where more than one individual was buried in the same grave.

The communal tomb became the communal tomb when the families, generations, and communities consecutively used the same chambers as burials, a practice referred to by Cooley (1968:192) as multiple successive burials. These chambers were often used in antiquity for multiple interments. In a sense then, “communal” is a more specific identification of the multiple burials.

Considering another aspect of secondary burials, Abercrombie (1979:31) states that what he calls “massive secondary burials” may have held 1500 times as many interments as primary burials. This type of burial may have been “secondary” in the sense that it was not “primary” or the initial burial, but their consideration at this point takes the discussion in a different direction. The typical secondary burials reflected on here, often utilizing repositories, being discussed below, appear in the context of communal burials.

The earlier examples of communal tombs seem to indicate that the bones were pushed aside rather carelessly to make room for the new interments. In some later

examples they appear to have been handled with more apparent care. Ben-Tor (1975:8) reported that as early as the Proto-Urban (pre-EBA) period in ancient Azor, communal tombs were being used. In his excavation of two hand-carved burial caves as many as two hundred individuals were interred. This kind of evidence points to the durability of burial customs in general and the common burials specifically.

This durability, or perhaps, resistance to change, may allow for interpretations to be suggested since they would be based on such a long-standing custom. It would seem burial customs, cited above as one of the more conservative aspects of cultural existence, would have been slower to change than perhaps some elements of culture. Other aspects of human existence may have been more connected to areas that involve less inviolability than death and afterlife.

Concerning Philistine time and culture; from the cist tomb to the jar burial, the remains of multiple individuals are found in both types of graves. At Azor evidence of a multiple burial was found in the double jar burial of two children. Multiple burial is also a custom found among the anthropoid clay coffins, which will be discussed in a later chapter devoted solely to that subject. Among those examples are tomb 116 from Deir el-Balah which contained three individuals. Bloch-Smith (1992:171) states that multiple burials were also found at Tell Aitun. Identified as tomb C1, this benched chamber tomb included the remains of over fifteen individuals. The burials found there included Philistine pottery. It is estimated that this tomb was used between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, placing its use at the time of the interaction of this ancient society with the Israelites of the Old Testament.

Another matter of concern in the study of multiple burials seems to be that of dating the various tomb contents. This is a challenge whether relating to the skeletal remains or the burial offerings. Bloch-Smith (1992:171) describes the Tell Aitun C1 tomb, mentioned above, as representing two different time periods. Philistine pottery is found in both levels of use. Curiously, the later community appears to have simply pushed the earlier material aside to make room for the new burials.

On the whole evidence seems to reveal that multiple burials were used when necessary, and that single burials were incorporated in that same fashion. Apparently social rank or wealth had little to do with whether individuals would be buried alone due to the presence of multiple burials in a variety of burial types. At Philistine sites like Azor, M. Dothan (1992:114) asserts that the most common graves were single burials, though certainly multiple burials were found as illustrated above.



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Photo taken by S. Fugitt, courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

## Reconstructed Communal Tomb

Museum of Archaeology  
and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania,  
Philadelphia

**Plate 4.** *Reconstructed Communal Tomb*

### **3.8 BURIALS OF RICH AND POOR**

This section is included to discuss a particular interpretation of the types of burials under consideration. The discussion here attempts to explain how the evidence of tomb types lends itself to a discussion of the wealth, means, or social status of the individuals interred. It seems to stand the scrutiny of logic that burials show distinctions in social stratification, such as has been evident in the burials of warriors. Kletter (2002:37) stresses that “comparative material from the same culture” must exist before burial contents can be used to determine wealth or poverty. It seems, however, that some measure of common sense assessment could apply to graves in this study. It seems relative wealth could be measured, at least from one burial to the next, even if not to the larger community. Given the plethora of Philistine material culture identified in numerous sites, some valuations can be suggested.

Black and Green (2000:89) affirm that to such a study as this, the real goal is to trace what can be known about “life and social status.” They are emphasizing the search for life patterns rather than simply identifying burial practices, but once again the issue of social stratification is raised. These classifications can be traced in a number of aspects throughout the burial context.

The study of burial types is definitely one of the ways by which the differences may be distinguished. On the outset it seems plausible that burials requiring more labor and skill to construct would more likely be those of the wealthier individuals from within

the community, while the simpler graves would then logically be linked to those who lacked the means to have a more expensive burial prepared.

Smith and Bloch-Smith (1988:280) inspired by their work with “folk religions” of ancient Israel, indicate that different levels of wealth may be envisioned by grave contents or burial offerings. This section of the paper, however, will focus more specifically on how the evaluation of tomb types may fulfill this particular purpose. Chapter five will pursue the area of grave contents, and will add elucidation to this area of the study as well.

Following the line of logic that the more difficult tombs equals wealthier occupants, the rock-cut tombs would be the tombs of the wealthy while the pit burials would be those of the poor. These two extremes would then be bridged by the various other kinds of burials identified as being associated with the Philistines. The difficulty in carving out the rock to make way for a burial obviously required more effort and labor hours to construct than the other types of tombs. A conspicuous example of linking labor hours to social status in antiquity is from Egypt where, beginning in the third millennium BC, the Pharaohs were buried in pyramids.

Jewelry found in burials seems to be somewhat of an indication of wealth or at least the individuals’ or the communities’ ability to provide for the deceased in that way. Examples of jewelry found in Philistine influenced tombs can be seen in the sites presented in this study. Jewelry was found in each of the 9 pit graves mentioned from Azor. A bronze bracelet was located in D8, and even a mirror in grave D15. There was also some silver found in D15, indicating the family/community involved in the interment was not without means to at least some degree.

There is evidence of jewelry present in the cist graves at Tell el-Farah (Bloch-Smith 1992:158). The jewelry in these sites, like others, accompanies a variety of items in addition to the normal array of pottery. Excavations of the jar burials at Azor have shown a silver bracelet and beads along with the remains of a child. The discussion will eventually turn to the study of anthropoid coffins, and it may be stated at this point that jewelry appears in those locations as well. In an anthropoid coffin grave at Lachish, for example, an earring along with beads were found in Cave 570.

### **3.9 PRESENCE OF OTHER CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

In a number of ways the influence of other cultures on Philistine burials is highlighted throughout the paper. This section seeks to define some of the most significant and influential of these cultures. Dominant influences can be seen in the burial types, offerings, and body treatments. As stated elsewhere, the two observable influences upon Philistine burial practices appear to be Egyptian and Mycenaean. The Egyptian influence may have been a natural result of their long-time control over the

Levant where the Philistines were settled around 1175 BC. By that time in history, however, they were beginning to lose some of their control over the area. The waning hegemony of Egypt during that time did not occur without first leaving a significant impression upon the areas previously under their domination.

Thus Egyptian influence is easily traceable throughout the burial materials considered here. M. Dothan (1992:114) points to the burial of a child at Azor to illustrate the presence of this influence. Many other sites could be mentioned, and in fact additional examples can be seen throughout this paper. At this particular burial, there were Egyptian designs on the pottery found in the grave. There was a scarab necklace bearing the image of Hapi—the god of the rising Nile. There were also several tombs lined with a mud-brick in a similar fashion as seen at Tell el-Yahudiyeh in Egypt.

Enduring economic transactions would be another reason for the cultural interchange envisioned in the burials. The symbiosis of ideas, practices of daily life, and accepted norms of social existence would have been exchanged along with the goods and services traded in the marketplace. This provides a plausible explanation for the Mycenaean pottery that preceded the presence of Mycenaean or Aegean type settlers in the Levant. Sites like Dan and Deir el-Balah reveal a record such as this, in which the pattern of economic activity can be envisioned. The exchange of cultural ideas did not take place in a specific moment in time. The transition from what we know as Bronze Age civilizations to those that became Iron Age was a long, slow, and painful path of progress for all the ancient peoples involved. Material evidence gained from the burial data is simply another piece in the jigsaw puzzle that emphasizes the reality of this process in the modern mind. Therefore, information gained about the Philistines as

related to burials during Iron Age I contributes to this overall picture of various peoples cohabitating in Canaan at that time in history.

Dominant influences evident alongside the Philistine presence in Canaanite burials will be Egyptian, Mycenaean, and indigenous Canaanite. T. Dothan (1992:199-208), in her chapter on *Tombs and Traditions, Egyptian Style*, provides material evidence that supports this observation. The evidence of a Mycenaean holdover to Philistine settlement in Canaan is the stone-cut tombs.

T. Dothan (1982:252) affirms that “the rock-cut chamber tombs and some of the associated objects are of Mycenaean origin.” Culturally and archaeologically this may be traceable, as stated above in an earlier section of this paper, but Lesko (2000:1770) cites examples of rock-cut tombs from New Kingdom Egypt. It was the discovery of the five rock-cut tombs at Tell el-Farah, according to the Dothans (1992:67), that inspired Petrie to identify them as the tombs of the five lords of the Philistines.

Types of tombs reflect cultural provenance. In his discussion on the rock-cut tombs, Davis (1988:184) distinguishes between “geotectural” and “architectural” graves. The geotectural type would describe the tombs under present consideration. These graves are those cut in the rock below the surface of the ground, as opposed to those built above ground or architecturally constructed for use as burials. This technical aspect will be helpful to know as the research delves into particular grave types at the sites to be considered. Since one of the characteristics of Philistine burials is the variety of tomb types, it is advantageous to the study, and also to a better comprehension of the subject matter, to be able to identify the type of tomb being examined with this kind of awareness.

There are more particular elements such as mourning figurines which provide a linkage to Mycenaean culture as well. These figurines, along with a variety of other burial offerings, will be explored in chapter five on *Grave Contents*. Certain cultural connections will be traced in order to clarify the understanding of possible origins of practices such as placing figurines in burials.

The Egyptian connection is seen in site after site in the presence of Egyptian wares, scarabs, and the like. One of the most obvious ways in which Egyptian influence can be seen in Philistine associated burials is in the anthropoid coffins to be discussed in chapter six. These two significant influences seem to indicate more than just a presence in the area at that time in history. Rather, they appear to represent an exchange of practical ideas and ideologies disseminated over a long period of time, in which these communities were exposed to the cultural norms of the various groups indicated. Gonen (1992:127), and others cited in this study, stress the Egyptian influence evident at sites such as Lachish, Tell el-Farah (S), and Tell el-'Ajjul.

While the Mycenaean culture may be the birth-mother of what would become the eventual Philistine civilization, it would seem that the Egyptian/Canaanite became an adopted guardian providing numerous means of shared cultural expression. The typical Philistine pottery found in burials, which has directed the avenue of research presently being pursued, is comprised of an eclectic amalgamation of the original Mycenaean skill with the style and expression seen in both Egyptian and Canaanite wares.

It is necessary that the study under present consideration be approached with an awareness of such a combination of backgrounds. It would otherwise be too confining and would tend to not allow for the various influences to play their essential roles in the

presentation for the truest possible picture to be imagined. Unfortunately, from a research standpoint, the ancient peoples did not neatly package their beliefs and daily practices in such a way that they can quickly and easily be uncovered and understood. They went about their business on a daily basis in much the same way modern societies exist today.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the modern researcher to interpret this material evidence, from over 3000 years ago, in a way that is both accurate and systematic. Such credible research must not be done with preconceived notions of what the outcome will be. The facts must be exposed and allowed to speak for themselves, from their own context. This helps to explain why notions and conclusions must change as new data is contributed to the equation. With present knowledge it is always possible to look back and see the mistaken identification of sites or cultures that were labeled in a time before the current material became available. Such is the world of researching the ancient past. It must be flexible yet decisive; willing to admit the need to change, yet able to speak with clarity about present knowledge.

### **3.10 IRREGULAR TRENDS**

The challenge of this section of the chapter will be to distinguish irregular trends in the burial customs considered. The regular customs will be those that appear in recurring regularity from site to site, usually in larger numbers. The irregular customs will be those that appear less often or rarely and in much less quantity. These may be customs that appear to have unordinary treatments of the body or preparation of the tomb. Specific facets of Philistine burials considered here as irregular will be cremation, skull burials, the individual burial of a man and his horse in the courtyard of Ashdod, and the dog burials at Ashkelon.

*Variety of tomb types.* It appears that the communities influenced by Philistine culture used a variety of tomb types. As has been described above in this chapter, it seems they buried their dead in whatever fashion was available to them. This complex issue combines components of cultural influence with practical usability and availability. This contrast in customs can be easily seen in the comparison of the pit or simple graves with the rock-cut tombs or the anthropoid coffins and associated material. From a single body, or multiple bodies for that matter, in a simple pit in the ground to a detailed clay sarcophagus with molded or appliquéd facial expressions in an Egyptian style, the contrast can be seen.

*Cremation.* One area of scholarly disagreement pertaining to cremation is its origin. Was it the result of new peoples and cultures moving into Canaan or is there a better explanation? Bienkowski (1982:80) cites the usual solution which has been to

point to the Sea Peoples, of which the Philistines are a part. He traces the practice of cremation in the Levant and throughout the Mediterranean world. He identifies the single incident of cremation at Azor but highlights the fact that it is an irregular expression of burial rites in that location since all other graves are inhumations. The meager evidence of cremation thus far discovered at Iron Age I Philistine sites, such as this one at Azor, makes it unlikely that they were the purveyors of this practice. The practice does seem to increase in later centuries, but that is not the focus of this paper, nor would such a late appearance of the custom be connected to the influence of Philistine culture since they had already been in the area for several centuries by that time.

Cremation is easier to identify than it is to interpret. These burials must be studied in order to attempt to discover the reason they were used, and to determine if there was any kind of theological or ideological motivation behind it. Meyers (1970:6) suggests that cremation could have been used to make room for the collection and preservation of skulls. His comments are referring specifically to tombs found at Jericho, but the principle is comparable. Bienkowski (1982:86) also interprets the “sporadic” instances of cremation as being evidence that it may have been used as a way to dispose of “bones which had become a nuisance.” In fact, because of its irregularity, he cautions against using this particular type of practice as any kind of gauge of culture at all.

When a particular burial context presents a tenuous element such as this, other data must be examined to determine the likely nature of the interment. One method that may make it possible to determine a cremation that was done immediately upon death is by considering the presence of, or lack of, burial offerings. It seems improbable that a half century after the person deceased that the family would still go to the trouble to

cremate each individual and supply them with offerings for the afterlife. This is especially true given the information regarding the treatment of the bones once the flesh had completely decayed, as discussed in another section of this paper. It appears more plausible that when death occurred, immediate care would have been taken to cremate the individual's body and to supply them with the necessary accouterments for the hereafter.

Another reason cremation burials may be difficult to interpret relates to the fact that the material evidence often tells little about the individuals interred, especially with no skeletal remains to analyze, no written records, and obviously in this context, no body adornments. Binford (1972:224) expresses the difficulty in accurately interpreting this practice. He states one may find “the same set of mortuary symbols but employ them antagonistically.” He also provides this succinct dictum: “one group cremates its chiefs and the other cremates its criminals.” The accumulation of evidence challenges simple interpretations and calls upon the material data to be closely examined in order to determine the nature of each burial of this type.

Waldbaum (1966:335) affirms from her study of the burial customs of the Mycenaeans, the predecessors of the Philistines, that chamber tombs were “gradually being replaced by cremation as the final Mycenaean period progressed.” Possibly a related motivation for the practice of cremation, worth mentioning at this point, may have to do with population and land space (Bienkowski 1982:86). It seems that inhumation was used as long as space was available, and cremations increased as populations grew and space became less abundant.

T. Dothan (1982:57) asserts that cremation in Palestine in the Iron Age may represent a “new ethnic element” in the area. It would be tempting to suggest that this

new element was the Mycenaean-based Philistine culture; however, the overwhelming evidence as it relates to burial types does not strongly support such an assertion at this point. It may represent a limited element of the Mycenaean culture, but by no means does this method of interment show up in Iron Age I Canaan as the compelling new method of burial. Kletter (2002:36) conjectures that cremation may be one reason for the lack of burial identification in some areas. If cremation would have been practiced, and ashes would have been scattered, there would be no remains for the archaeologists' spade to uncover. But, as Kletter affirms, how could this supposition ever be demonstrated?

There is the issue of Saul's body being burned by the people of Jabesh-Gilead. T. Dothan (1982:57) raises this issue in her discussion on cremation and simply states that it is a departure from tradition. She furthermore asserts that no corroborating passage appears in the Chronicle's account. Vannoy (1995:416) suggests, and the same idea is echoed by Bienkowski (1982:87), that this may have been done before further dishonor could be brought to the bodies of Saul and his sons. This situation will be discussed later as it applies to the literary materials' influence on the discussion.

Excavator Moshe Dothan (1961:173) identified the partial cemetery on the "kurkar" hill at Azor as a site influenced by Philistine culture. At this location, Dothan classified the burials found into three groups—Group A, B, and C. Group B, specifically burial 63, is the example of cremation. He dated the find to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. This single example of the practice within the Philistine context at Azor makes cremation appear as an abnormal and irregular custom in this period as discussed above. However, also found at Azor was the burial labeled D9 in which the earth was blackened by an apparent fire at some time during the interment. As already mentioned, the motivation

for this alleged burning is unknown. What can be known is that this is not a common practice in other burials throughout the area thus far found.

Mitchell (1963:131-132) proposes that it may be appropriate to distinguish between complete and partial cremations in the study of ancient burials, since in certain locations cremations are complete while others are only partial. The particular interments referred to at this point are from the so-called “Royal Cemetery” at Ur. Mitchell affirms that such a study would be appropriate, but its pursuit here goes beyond the scope of the paper. It is worth noting that cremation is an irregular practice within the Philistine context, and at this point does not likely indicate anything beyond what has been discussed here. Mitchell does assert that cremations could have occurred at the time of interment or after the period of decay had passed. In a type of partial cremation, the body would have been burned just long enough for the flesh to have been devoured by the fire. He (132) states, however, that the most common among the ancient burials was the more complete version of cremation which would have left only ash and fragments.

*Dog burials at Ashkelon.* The reason these burials are mentioned here is because Ashkelon is one of the major Philistine cities of the Old Testament. In putting together information on burials pertaining to the Philistines and Philistine sites, it would seem that at least a brief comment should be made about the over 1000 dog burials at Ashkelon. Though Ashkelon has been confirmed as one of the five cities of the Pentapolis, their presence at Ashkelon at the time the dogs were buried is unlikely, having disappeared after the Babylonian destruction of 604 BC. Scheffler (2000:128) mentions one of the suggested uses for the dogs as part of a “healing cult,” because they would lick sores and flesh wounds which in turn would speed the healing process.

Scheffler (2000:128) also suggests an economic connection to the presence of the dogs. Positioned at the coastal port they could have been shipped throughout the Mediterranean world to be used for the healing cult, hunting, or other purposes. Though no direct link can be made to the community who buried the dogs over approximately half a century, there is the possibility that descendants of once Philistine residents may have been involved. Any sort of connection of this nature would be impossible to trace. In fact, David Schloen (2002:online) reports that by the time of this post-destruction period habitation under consideration here, diverse influences were such that anything previously distinguishable as Philistine was gone. In fact Schloen states that the city was eventually resettled by the Phoenicians.

*Single burial in Courtyard.* A very irregular burial of a man and his horse was found by excavators in the courtyard of Ashdod. M. Dothan (1992:173-174) reports this grave was dated to Iron Age I, the period of time in which the Philistines were engaged in conflicts with the Israelites as described in the Bible. Dothan suggests the burial may reflect the special status of this individual. This suggestion is made for several reasons. Surrounding the grave were walls of fairly significant size indicating some type of courtyard setting. This individual may have held a special social status indicated by the proximity of the grave to the population center of the city. It is suggested that this individual may have been a warrior, since he was buried with a dagger. What is especially intriguing about the knife is that its shape is in a characteristic Greek form with a slight curve near the point. To add to the fascination, the blade was made of thick iron. Dothan asserts here again that this was early for the use of iron as weapons in the area. The earliest iron objects were small articles of adornment such as jewelry or luxury

items. In addition, it is suggested that the grave may have been somehow connected to the cult, which would also highlight its significance.

The irregularity of this burial is emphasized, not only in the burial of the horse along with its rider, but in the location of the grave inside the city, protected by a surrounding wall. It seems to go against most ancient cultural sensibilities to locate graves near the population. It appears that most of the graves researched so far were located on the edge of the Tel in one direction or another.

A possible exception to this apparent norm is found at Ugarit. Chambers identified as tombs from Ugarit were located not only within close proximity to the city, but in the very dwellings of the residents. Marchegay (2000:208-209) supports the theory that these “intramural” tombs were in fact tombs, as first suggested by the original excavator of Ugarit, Claude Schaeffer. Yon (1992:114) depicts the early 13<sup>th</sup> century house as being “equipped with a burial installation.” Meijer (2003:57) cites the use of intramural burials in some locations, which make their possible use at Ugarit not without precedent. It is also not without precedent that the same chamber-type structures could have been used as tombs at one time and as cisterns at another, which was apparently done at Gezer (Gonen, 1992:126 & Bloch-Smith, 1992:168).

Gonen (1992:20) refers to these “intramural” burials as a type indigenous to Middle Bronze Canaan. She states that this practice occurred from the MB through the Iron Age, and is more often seen in sites that show a continuous occupation from one period to the next. Given the 12<sup>th</sup> century date for the arrival of the Philistines in Canaan, her findings would seem to make them unlikely candidates for this type of burial.

Sandars (1985:44) points to a Cypriot context where the wealthy appeared to be buried beneath the courtyards of their own houses. The fact that they were buried with a wide array of burial offerings affirms that these were actual burials and not the result of a natural disaster or military slaughter. This fact, combined with the long established connection between the Philistines and Cypriot cultures, seems to do more to confuse the issue than solve the problem. It does, however, reflect the need for on-going research in the area of burials, burial customs, and their related cultural provenance.

In search of cultural connections, Waldbaum (1966:337n) indicates that the initial identification of the rectangular shaped tombs was of Mycenaean or Aegean origin, but she states that “on further study Schaeffer could find no evidence of direct Mycenaean influence on the construction of these tombs.” The identification of these carved chambers as tombs has been challenging. They also include what Schaeffer identified as “libation installations.” Pitard (1994:20-35) has interpreted these “installations” as possibly serving a more practical purpose such as cisterns, ordinary sumps, latrines, roof gutters, foundation deposits, or olive presses.

*Variations in tomb shapes* From the Gezer excavation Dever (1993:504) identifies Macalister’s tombs 9, 58, and 59 as dating to the period of time under consideration. Bloch-Smith (1992:175) describes the three tombs as roughly circular in shape. These tombs each contain Philistine pottery and would potentially share a similar Mycenaean connection, though they do not fit the pattern of the rectangular shape. They are reported to have been cut in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, being used as tombs from then through the early 10<sup>th</sup> century.

This early date should have been close enough to the early Mycenaean settlement cultures to have reflected common customs. As discussed above, however, there may have been a multiplicity of reasons as to why this slight discontinuity in tomb shapes exists. Gonen (1992:127) affirms the Philistine connection to this site, even though it is some distance north and east from Ekron. She connects Philistines to the area during the Iron I period, as other evidence has confirmed.

*Skull burials.* Excavator Moshe Dothan (1958:273) identified Philistine funerary remains at Azor. An example of skull burials from an Iron Age I occupation were also found. The origin and purpose of this practice may not be fully known. Meyers (1970:6) has suggested a link to cremation, since burning the larger portion of the body would allow space for more skulls to be preserved. He (1970:16) also applies the concept of “pars pro toto” to the secondary burial as it relates to skull burials. This is the concept that states that a part can represent the whole. In this context, the skull would have represented the individual even though the entire body was not interred in the same fashion and location as the skull. Bloch-Smith (1992:152) observes that seven such interments were found at Azor. Interestingly, there were burial offerings included in these tombs. At least one burial, designated as D18 was enclosed in a stone structure. Tomb D34 contained the skulls of two individuals along with a couple of vessels, including a pilgrim flask.

The question of the significance of this type of burial is raised in the study of the evidence. It is possible that the rest of the skeleton could have been destroyed some time in antiquity. This would likely have been done by wild animals since the climate is

conducive to the preservation of the remains. It could also be plausible that the body was cremated and buried separately and not yet found.

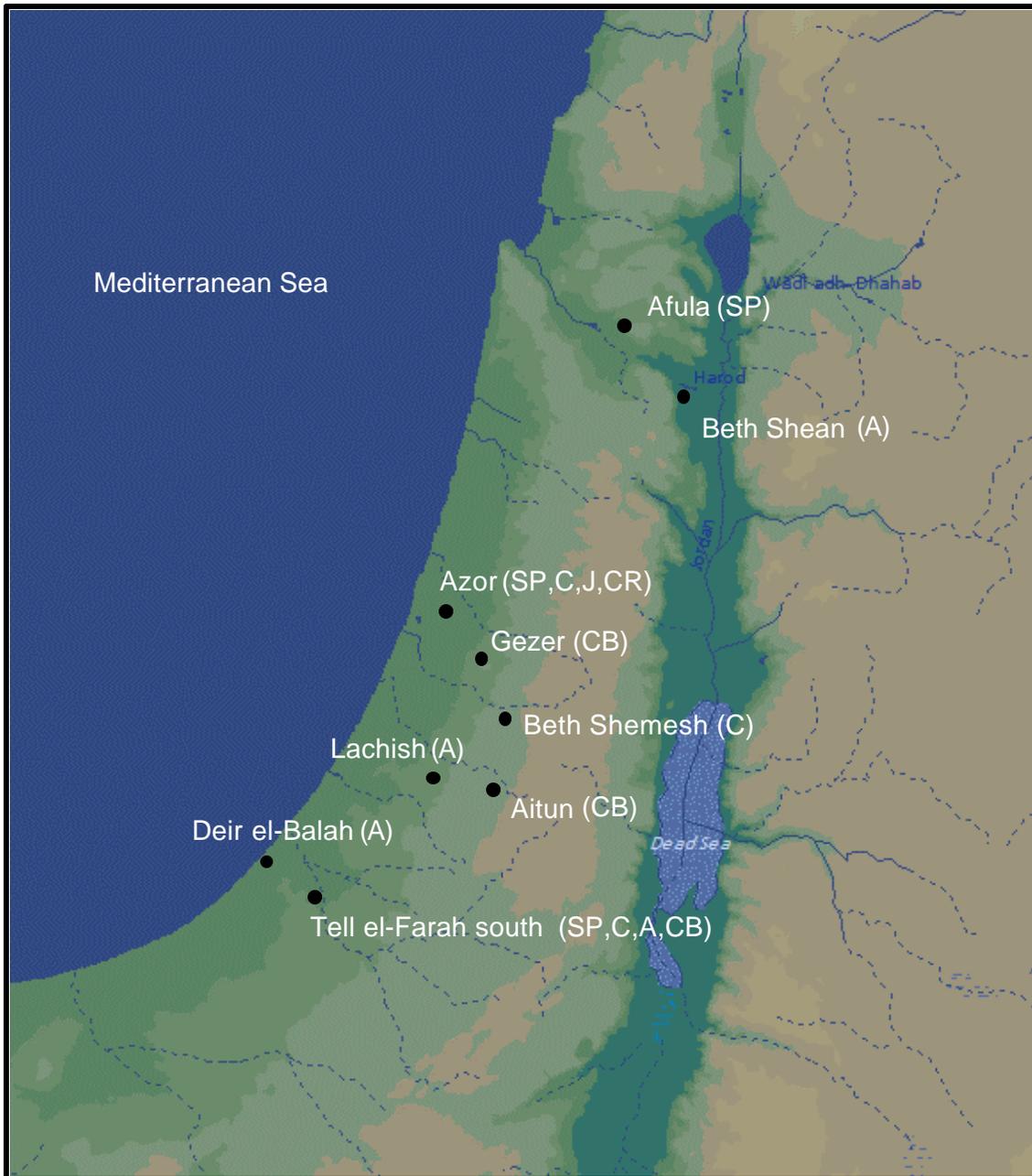
### 3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to clarify the types of burials from Iron Age I Canaan that contained material evidence of Philistine culture. These various types of graves and tombs have been defined along with their accompanying features. The significance of each burial type has been emphasized. Identifying what exactly this significance is has proven to be quite subjective. Evaluations offered in this paper are based primarily on the archaeological data, and understandably can only provide information limited to that particular discipline.

A variety of types of graves have been presented in which Philistine influence can be detected through the material data. The simple or pit burials, cist burials, jar burials, chamber tombs, and bench tombs have all been defined and described. Examples of each type have been given and discussed in order to help clarify the nature of these practices. Single and multiple burials have been presented in their varied contexts. The Philistine

culture has consistently shown an amazing adaptability in other areas of their social relationships with their neighbors around them, and they have not failed to show that same adaptability in the study of tomb types.

This chapter also revealed irregular trends occurring in the research of Philistine burials, such as cremation. This custom has been affirmed in only one instance at the Philistine Iron I context at Azor. Perhaps a necropolis replete with funerary jars of cremated remains will be found some day at one of the major Philistine sites. Until then, the study will be limited to the available data. Some of the considerations presented here are reminders that enigmatic issues predictably arise when working with material from the ancient past, and one must work to piece together the clearest picture possible of the culture under analysis. To assist the reader in this analysis a map is provided below showing the types of tombs and where they were located in relationship to the Philistine world.



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● ***Selected LB to IA tombs reflecting Philistine or associated influences***

**TOMB AND BURIAL TYPES**

- SP: Simple or Pit
- C: Cist
- J: Jar
- A: Anthropoid clay coffins
- C: Cave
- CB: Chamber/Bench
- CR: Cremation

**Plate 5.** Map showing Philistine influenced tomb types from Iron Age I

## CHAPTER 4

### *CARE AND TREATMENT OF BODIES*

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The demographically-oriented discussion on tomb types in chapter three involves locating burials of the Philistines and Philistine influenced interments. Identification of the graves allows for the placement of those tombs geographically. It has attempted to establish a sense of the numbers of individuals buried in these sites. Such an evaluation of tomb types and burials yields insight into the cultural settings and geological background of the specific locations. This chapter will analyze a specific aspect of the contents of the tombs, that of human remains. This material will focus on the care and treatment of the bodies from these contexts.

No where in the course of this paper will the discussion come as close to the actual ancient peoples' existence as it does here. Information will be drawn from the array of available skeletal remains, or what Sheridan (1999:574-611) calls the "skeletal catalog." This pursuit will attempt to evaluate the sensitivity of these ancient cultures toward the common experience of death. To some degree it will strive to visualize the human ethos in this ancient context.

The treatment of bodies will be illustrated through the observable ways in which these ancient communities cared for the deceased. Community and cultural customs may be identified by these observations. The treatment of bodies reflects social rudiments that will help to clarify a picture of Philistine culture. The basic form of burial was inhumation in which the greatest care and time investment would have been made for the deceased and their memory. Another type of body treatment within the context of a Philistine setting was the cremation found at Azor as was already discussed in the previous chapter on tomb types.

Most of the burials within any context from Iron Age I Canaan were inhumations. Another identifiable form of burial was cremation, though these examples are rare in Philistine Iron Age I burials. This practice did not seem to begin to increase dramatically until Iron Age II. Both of these types of treatments reflect the care and time taken to prepare the body for burial, which may otherwise have been left to a more natural method of final destruction—to be devoured by the wild animals. Craffert (1999:47) asserts that for a dead body to be left for the predatory animals in the wild would have been the equivalent of a curse to many of the ancient peoples. The biblical record in 1 Chronicles 10 indicates that just such a curse may have been delivered to Saul and his sons when their bodies were left on Mount Gilboa. As has been observed in every area of focus thus far, this specific facet of the study will also be a sign of the symbiotic relationship shared with the various peoples of Iron Age Canaan.

The crucial purpose of this chapter is actually two-fold. Initially, it will contribute to one of the overall goals of the project, which is to discover what can be known about how the ancient peoples may have thought about life, death, and afterlife.

Once again, only those buried in the target sites will be considered. To reiterate, the target sites are those showing evidence of Philistine influence by the presence of Philistine material data. In this chapter the purpose of the paper will be advanced through examining how the dead were handled. Burial records of these sites will be scrutinized in search of any potentially helpful details.

This chapter will also explore what can be known about this ancient culture by studying the available information about the bodies themselves. The most thorough examination of this type would involve specialists from a wide variety of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, paleopathology, and perhaps other sciences. A smaller-scale version will be presented in this chapter. This pursuit will function somewhat like the examination of tomb types in the previous chapter. It will contribute practical data pertaining to the biological aspect of the project, thus augmenting the biocultural profile presented in chapter two. These quests potentially produce illuminating information about what this culture was like, how the people lived from day to day, how they thought about life, and ultimately, how they thought about death and afterlife.

## **4.2 WHAT CAN BE KNOWN?**

The care with which the body was treated reflects the attitude toward the deceased and their memory, but it also reveals sensitivity to their needs in their afterlife existence. The family would have wanted their loved one to be comfortable and to be as well equipped for their continued existence as possible. Coulanges (1955:64) observed that the ancient Greeks did not view death as the end of human existence, but simply as a “change of life.” Bloch-Smith (1992:17n.) sets forth a similar concept, which is commonly understood as a way the ancient mind was oriented toward death and afterlife. Concepts of burial in the Bronze through Iron Ages reflect the careful handling of the body as an expression of belief in the afterlife.

Bodies were handled in a variety of ways in the contexts under consideration and a wide range of knowledge can be gained from a study of the methods employed. At times it is also possible to gain clues to the cause of death from analyzing how a body was handled. Drawing from the study of burials of a later period, Scheffler (2000:115) affirms that the remains in ossuaries can “give much information about how the deceased died.”

Ossuaries are a form of secondary burial. Clay ossuaries were found by Perrot (1993:125) in the 1958 excavation at Azor. These ossuaries were dated to before 3000 BC and were located in a burial cave at the site. The Department of Antiquities reported that such a practice of collecting bones of deceased individuals had some type of cultic importance. The bone boxes here were shaped as small “houses” which would seem to have some significance itself.

Consideration may be given at this point regarding the severed skull burials found at several sites. A couple of observations avail themselves concerning these skulls and why they appear in the graves unattached from their bodies. It is possible that these individuals were either killed by being beheaded, or were beheaded after they were already dead. This practice was apparently known during that time which can be attested to by references to such incidents in the biblical literature.

In the 1 Samuel 17 account of David and Goliath, David is seen as cutting off the giant's head. In 1 Samuel 31, when the Philistines found the body of Israelite King Saul, they decapitated it and hung his body on the wall at Beth Shean. The 1 Samuel passage gives no indication as to what may have been done with the head of Saul, but 1 Chronicles 10:10 states it was taken to the temple of Dagon. Perhaps it was presented to Dagon as an offering of thanks for allowing them to conquer their enemy.

Conceivably the cache of heads found in caves and tombs may at times represent such trophies of war. The chronicler makes it appear as if the Philistines left the bodies of Saul and his sons for the elements and wild animals. It states that the residents of Jabesh-Gilead then took the bodies and buried them in Jabesh (1 Chronicles 10:12). More discussion on the biblical insights of Philistine practices concerning death and burial may be found in chapter seven.

Bloch-Smith (1992:37) relates that at a later tomb at Lachish, called Cave 120, over 1500 skulls of individuals were interred. It may be suggested, especially given the large number of skeletal remains, that this may represent a burial rite of which little is known today. The overwhelming number of remains in this setting is staggering, and

definitely raises some questions, such as what would have been done with the bodies, and why are the skulls buried without them, and why were they collected in one location?

Cooley (1968:87) identifies Jericho Tomb J-1 as an example of skull arrangement. He states that the skulls in the tomb were positioned around the edge of the tomb and suggests that they may have been related to the veneration of ancestors. These arrangements varied from large amounts of skulls piled in one location to the method mentioned here.

Bloch-Smith (1992:37) relates that in the Lachish context where these 1500 individuals were interred, they were covered with burned animal bones which were mostly pig. The inclusion of animal bones in the graves may give some indication of cultural connections. Following are examples of how this facet of the study can be a valuable addition to the accumulating body of knowledge. Animal bones present in the context of a grave, such as those found in the later period Lachish 120, have sometimes been cited with the purpose of identifying cultural affinities.

This type of information may be helpful whether the remains were found in a burial or in another context associated with a particular culture. Specific cultural identification may be made possible because the prescribed diet of a particular religious system will prohibit certain animals from appearing on the menu. Hesse and Wapnish (1997:239n) caution against using the presence or absence of pig bones as *prima facie* of cultural identity. They emphasize that each site where the remains are found should be studied in its own context. Every possible area of analysis should be applied toward an interpretation. Besides religious or cultic prohibitions against pig husbandry, Hesse and Wapnish (1997:240) list other reasons presence of pig remains may not be found in some

regions. Another very practical example they suggest is related to ecology or the climate linked to the 300 mm isohyet. Rainfall would have been an essential ingredient to such a venture.

The most ubiquitous example familiar to the Judeo-Christian mindset is the prohibition against pork in the Old Testament. This prohibition is a reminder of the concept of the “otherness” of non-Israelites, derived from the biblical sources. In a sense the “other” is the antithesis of anything which might be interpreted as Israelite or Yahwistic. The Old Testament’s contention that Israel must maintain a uniqueness and separateness from her neighbors presents an ideal that was most likely not always achieved in every aspect of daily life.

The recurring polemic against the Philistines and other non-Israelites seems to be a theme of the biblical historian. With this in mind, Israel may be defined in the Old Testament as whatever the Philistines were not, and the Philistines may then be defined as whatever Israel was not. All in all, the Philistines play this role quite well throughout the Old Testament, and in many ways the archaeological records show support for this point of view.

An example of the archaeological collaboration can be seen from an examination of the pig bones on the chart seen below. This is clearly observed in the first graph which, for example, shows 18% of bones found at Tell Mique Ekron as pig, with 0% at Jerusalem. One may be assured that an understanding of the results of the graph cannot be simplified to such a degree at every stage, but this one comparison emphasizes the point being made. The Philistines were different from the Israelites at times and the inclusion of pig in their diet is one of the ways this difference may be envisioned.

Following the pattern of this kind of evidence, it is not surprising and perhaps even expected then to find pig bones in sites related to the Philistines. It should be emphasized, however, that pig bones alone in a burial site cannot make a link to Philistine culture, since they have been found in other contexts as well. Pig bones have been recorded in significant numbers in unquestionable Philistine sites dating to the Iron Age I period, such as Ekron mentioned above, but no cemeteries have been found in those contexts.

As with any bit of archaeological evidence, the facts must be allowed to speak for themselves, even though it is tempting to make interpretational leaps. Somewhere along the way some leaps must be made in order for any interpretation to exist at all. The suggestions should be carefully guided by the available data from within the specific context, as well as any input from the broader body of knowledge that may be applicable. In this sense then, the material data will provide the decisive link to Philistine burials. The aspects of Philistine culture not found in large amounts or in any kind of regular pattern, such as pig bones in graves, are added to help elucidate the image. Even though pig remains can be clearly aligned with Philistine sites, it is evident through the archaeological data that the Philistines were not the only people groups enjoying their pork.

Bloch-Smith (1992:162) identifies Kfar Yehoshua as a location that fits a pattern that should be understood at this point. This pattern can be seen at sites where pig remains may be found, but there is no evidence of Philistine pottery. One such burial uncovered contained the skeletal remains of a man wearing a scarab ring. This type of

evidence makes a connection to Egypt probable. This evidence seems to reveal that the Egyptians, like the Philistines, had no aversion to pigs.

The percentages of pig bones found in the sites may be noted from the diachronic chart below. It should be observed that the percentages of pig remains occurring at the Philistine sites, even though they may reflect some of the larger percentages, are still not overwhelmingly large. At this point only one instance of pig bones appearing in the context of a Philistine burial from Iron Age I can be identified, those at Azor's grave 63 cremation. A definite link between the evidence from this site and Philistine culture may be tenuous at this point.

The Azor cremation is an isolated incident of cremation, not found in any other Iron Age I Philistine context so far. With such a lack of evidence and with this being the only incident, it seems the evidence does not support the idea that Philistines were the purveyors of cremation burial, making this context rather spurious for use in identifying burial customs. Dever (1974:14) refers to the evidence of cremation appearing at Gezer along with identifiable pottery from as early as the Late Chalcolithic period. Its appearance at Azor's Iron I level may reveal certain isolated practices employed at that time, but it does not seem to represent a custom being widely exercised. The vast majority of the graves showing Philistine influence from Iron Age I Canaan are some type of inhumation. This lop-sided bit of evidence does not completely rule out a connection between the Philistines, pig remains, and burials, but it does not solidify the connection either. Stager (1998:165) reports that the limited faunal remains evaluated from Ashkelon included 23% pork. It should be noted that the difference in percentages

given by Knight from that of Stager is due to the narrower scope of Knight's graph, in which he focuses on the Iron I period.

There seems to be some evidence of Mycenaean and possible Cypriot influence, which may identify this community as either being some of the Mycenaean predecessors to Philistine culture or at least having been influenced by them. There were some Mycenaean imitations and imports found in the graves. There is also evidence of Egyptian influence in the tombs at Lachish, creating the fairly common eclectic mix of cultures which has been seen in the study of other burial sites as well.

In contrast to the suggestion that Philistine culture can be associated with the use of pigs, whether in their diet or cult, pig remains were not found in Temple complex 650 at Ekron, one of the major Philistine cities of the Old Testament. Evidence from the temple shows faunal remains, 97% of which were "ovicaprines" (sheep and goats) and cattle. These findings are dated to the seventh century, which is later than the focus of this study, but may reflect the cultural predisposition of their predecessors, or it may represent a shift in the cultural norm by that time in history. It may be observed on the chart labeled Plate 4 that there is a decrease of 8% in pig remains found at Ekron from the Iron Age I to the Iron Age II period.

Knight (2001) has put together this insightful diachronic chart on pig remains which can be helpful to the study here. On the chart he traces the measurable evidence of pig remains in a number of sites throughout Palestine from the Early Bronze Age through Iron Age II. His focus is on the turbulent period around 1200 BC, when there was evidence of wholesale change and transition in the area ethnically and culturally. For this

study, it should be noted that the most significant percentages of pig remains were found in the contexts of Early and Middle Bronze Ages and not the Iron Age.

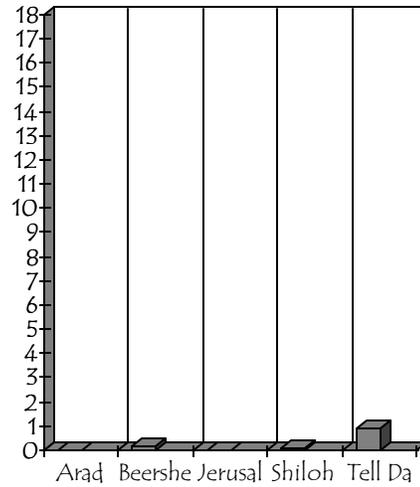
This turbulent period is the same time in history with which this paper is concerned. It is that period when the Philistines, or at least a significant number of Philistines, entered the areas along the eastern Mediterranean coast and settled there under the tenuous control of the Pharaoh of Egypt. It is also roughly this time in history that the Israelites of the Old Testament make their way into the land and begin settling in and around the Canaanite cities of the hill country and central areas.

It is to this period that much of the conflict between the Philistines and the Israelites of the Bible is ascribed. The picture presented is one of cultural conflicts that seem insurmountable at times. Pertaining to the presence of pig in the diet, T. Dothan and Cohn (1994:67) cite T. Dothan's excavation at Tel Mique Ekron, referred to above, to state that evidence is available to support the possibility that pork may have been introduced into some of these areas by the Philistines. This is likely the same evidence from Ekron as was mentioned above and may very well date to the later period.

Knight's (2001) diachronic chart presented below shows a definite distinction between the levels of pig evidence in sites associated with the Philistines and those associated with the Israelites. It should be noted that even in the Philistine sites where pig remains are noted, the highest levels seem to be later as opposed to earlier. This evidence appears to support the concept of Philistines as dissimilar from the Old Testament Israelites.

This information is submitted here for the purpose of associating the presence of pigs with the residents of Philistine communities. Other information will be added which

will be more directly connected to the burials of the Philistines. As mentioned, Knight's study seems to indicate that the heaviest use of pigs was during the pre-Israelite/pre-Philistine days, peaking out during the Middle Bronze Age. It then shows a rapid and steady decline through the Late Bronze Age, finding its lowest point at Iron Age I, during the time the Philistines were settling there. Among the Iron Age pig remains, however, it may be noted that Philistine sites were among the heaviest users of pig. Overall, usage levels seem to be much lighter during this later time than during the earlier periods outlined. Hesse and Wapnish (1997:244) provide a much broader chart tracing pig remains found from Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and areas in between. The numbers they provide for Iron I sites seen here are comparable in percentages. The most significant difference is from Iron I Ashkelon where they list 19% of animal remains as pig instead of the 10% to 11% given here.



### Iron Age I Pig Bone Frequencies

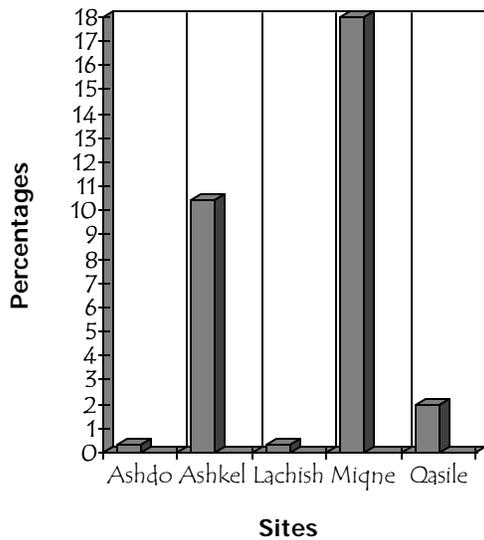


Figure 1. Philistine sites with evidence of pig bones

Figure 2. Non-Philistine sites with pig bone remains

**Plate 6. Knight's Pig Bone Frequencies.** Graph customized by Fugitt. Note: The percentages reflect the degree of pig bones as opposed to other bones found in the sites listed. The two graphs demonstrate a contrast in the percentages between the sites. The graph in figure 1 lists information from Philistine sites and those with connection to Philistine culture, while the comparative graph in figure 2 represents sites with no link to the Philistines. Interestingly, Arad and Jerusalem both showed no evidence of pig remains in Knight's analysis. It is evident by the study of figure 1 that there is little consistency even among the Philistine sites.

Another aspect of culture than can be known by studying the skeletal remains pertains to the ethnic background of the burial subjects under consideration. Physical anthropological analyses have provided data for this type of study and contribute to the survey of burials in general and in this context to Philistine burials. “Brachycephalic” is a term, according to an article published through Rutgers University (2002:online), which identifies individual skulls that may be described as shorter and wider than others in comparison.

According to the information the brachycephalic skull is one in which the cephalic index is greater than eighty. Brachycephalic may also be defined as “round headed.” This skull type may then be distinguished from the “dolichocephalic” or “long-headed.” The Rutgers article states that the dolichocephalic skull would have a cephalic index of less than seventy-five. Another type of skull measurement appearing in the research is one referred to as “mesocephalic” or of medium dimension. This material is not intended to promote stereotyping or profiling as it is often called, but to assist in understanding more about the nature of these ancient individuals and communities, and enable an anthropological comparison of the cultures to be made.

M. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:113) utilized this type of physical anthropological analysis on human remains uncovered at Azor in the Philistine context. The skeletal remains of five different individuals were submitted for testing and the

results were anything but uniform. No consistent picture of Philistine culture could be imagined. Physical anthropologist Denise Ferenbach conducted the analyses and concluded that the individuals had come from the Balkans or Asia Minor, with one being traced to somewhere in central Europe. Only one of the five skulls that were testable showed any Mediterranean influence at all, and it was of mixed characteristics. Dothan states that these results “indicated a surprising mixture of influences that had suddenly joined together in Canaan at the early phase of the Iron Age.”

This lack of uniformity is not totally surprising given the apparent adaptability of the Philistine culture in virtually every area of observable existence. This is consistent with typical Philistine pottery, which is the composite creation of a culture evolving over time as a result of the various influences upon them. Beyond the scope of this paper, but certainly worth mentioning at this point, is the biblical record indicating the Philistine worship of Ba'al and Dagan, deities of the Canaanites. It is more likely that the original Philistine settlers in Canaan worshiped forms of Aegean deities, such as the Mother goddess, and later became familiar with Ba'al and Dagan/Dagon.

Philistine pottery and the apparently adopted cult practices are simply a couple of examples of Philistine adaptability which support the symbiotic model presented in chapter two. This model is continually substantiated from the material records being researched, and assists in fulfilling one of the main objectives of this project; to help clarify the image of who the Philistines of the Old Testament really were.

Perhaps one of the reasons Philistines appear to have been as adaptable as they were was because of the varied background from the very beginning of their entrance on the cultural stage during the turbulent period of transition near the beginning of the Iron

Age. The author traces what key scholars have said regarding the origin of the Philistines in a Master's dissertation with the University of South Africa (Fugitt:2000). This present paper draws from that foundation of information and builds upon it.

Hints of this variegated background are traceable in the burial records as well. Bloch-Smith (1992:152) indicates that examinations of skeletal remains found in nine pit graves at Azor have revealed these individuals as "brachycephalic." This does not conclude that Philistines were all necessarily brachycephalic, since there is no absolute confirmation that the individuals buried here were Philistine. In fact, Ferenbach's findings may reflect a truer picture of the nature of an "ethnic Philistine," if in fact the terms can be used together in the same sentence. This ethnic mix could be the same reason Philistine material culture shows such an amalgamation of cultural affinities. They were a people of composite nationalities who shared common bonds in certain areas of their material culture. Brug (1985:163) warns that the evidence is inadequate to determine "racial characteristics," though he concedes that what is available portrays an ethnic composite.

With these disclaimers made and background somewhat outlined, the following discussion will pursue the identities of several individuals at various sites and in an assortment of tomb or burial types. It will seek to incorporate the bits and pieces of the evidence into a single perception of who these people were. It does not attempt to present them as a particular single ethnic group.

Bloch-Smith (1992:152) identifies a brachycephalic male buried in a cist grave at Azor. He was buried with a large four-handled storejar and multiple bowls. The grave is labeled as K10. It appears that family members overseeing this interment cared enough

to see that this individual was well provisioned. At the same site there was a brachycephalic woman buried in the grave identified as burial D84. She was also buried in a cist grave. In contrast to such a large vessel in K10, this grave contained no objects. Interestingly, very near D84 was grave D76 which contained Philistine material.

Another significant contrast that relates to the skeletal remains is seen in an additional grave at Azor. Information from the study of this grave will also add to the body of knowledge of what can be known about this culture by studying human remains. In slight contrast to the others identified there, the skeleton of a four year old child was found and has been identified as mesocephalic, which reflects cranial dimensions of medium size rather than the more typical broad-headed classification.

Like the others mentioned, this burial was also discovered at Azor, but this child's skeleton was found buried in a jar rather than lying open in the cist grave. These graves are all dated to the Iron Age I period, and are found in the context of Philistine pottery, making them significant to the study at hand. Again it may be observed that there is evidence to support the theory that Philistine culture was of a diverse background and that adapted to their surroundings.

Much can be gained through the study of how bodies were handled. This is true whether the body treatment can be confirmed as a preparation for an interment, or if it represents a different phase of contact with the remains, such as a secondary burial. Some of the material gathered from this type of study may contribute to the biocultural profile, adding to the biological sphere of the investigation. Each of the three aspects of the biocultural profile, along with the four sub-areas, will be developed by pulling together the material to be studied. This material may then collectively form a more

complete picture of the nature of these people who were buried in the context of Philistine pottery.

Within the structure of the profile several elements exist that help to clarify some of the issues raised from this type of study. The particular areas of diet, stature, demography, and paleopathology all reveal applicable information at this juncture of the analysis. As other areas will also contribute to this profile, it is noted that the study of body treatment in dealing with the human remains is one area that is most enlightening to the pursuit.

#### **4.3 BODY POSITIONS AND DIRECTIONS**

Body positions and directions appear to have been an important concern for many of the ancient biblical peoples. These facets of burial become important customs in the funerary system. There seems to be little continuity regarding both the direction the body was laid in the grave and the direction or location of the burials from the population centers. Initially it does appear that each community found its own sense of continuity thus stressing the importance of such a concern in the minds of the residents of a specific location, even if their methodology may have differed from their neighbors down the road.

Bloch-Smith (1992:25) indicates a variety of orientation in her discussion on the simple or pit graves in the southern region. In fact, from her (1992:70) evaluation of the burials throughout Iron Age I Canaan she observes that no pattern is discernable. The

Philistine context is no less variegated than the general course of burials from the other communities represented in the archaeological information.

The specific locations of Afula, Azor, Lachish and Deir el-Balah all show obvious variations in directions. These sites, as it may be noted from the previous chapter, are connected to Philistine culture by the material records there. Several of the Philistine burials presented show a significant Egyptian influence in the archaeological data. It seems logical that this influence could also be imagined in ideological areas.

From his study of ancient Egyptian tombs, Lesko (2000:1769) stresses the possibility that body position may have been an important part of the burial process. He cites the early Egyptian pit burial as an example of this emphasis. The bodies from this early period of Egyptian burial were buried in pits or simple burials. The individuals were laid on their left side with their head to the south. This would have then caused them to be facing the west, a significant symbol in Egyptian thought about death and afterlife.

The east-west orientation of the body appears to be quite common throughout ancient Canaanite burials. In this particular orientation the deceased is buried with their head to the west, which seems to have been fairly common in the cemetery at Azor in the Philistine setting. From the simple graves there, Bloch-Smith (1992:152) reports that in the nine pit graves found dating between the years 1100 to 1000 BC the bodies were buried with heads to the west. This same burial practice was continued in the cist burials at Azor. In the burial labeled K10, once again the individual was buried with their head to the west, as was D22 and D30, identifying a possible pattern at this location. These types of patterns appear to be somewhat traceable within the setting of a

particular site, though it is much more difficult to find such a pattern from one site to the next in different locations.

The aspect of body position of the deceased is important to the study here because in reflecting certain patterns, other less traceable patterns of thought such as ideologies about death may be implied. As opposed to the early Egyptian burials identified by Lesko above as having been buried consistently laying on their side in the “fetal” position, the graves found in the Philistine context have consistently shown bodies lying supine.

Though Egyptian influence seems quite apparent in many ways in the Philistine graves, the Egyptian practice of embalming seems to show no parallel in the Philistine context. Lesko (2000:1763) indicates that mummification in Egypt may have been reserved for the wealthy, therefore disallowing its use among many of the common people of that culture. Perhaps it may have been because of a similar economic reason, or the lack of available materials in Canaan, that the practice cannot be seen in Philistine burials. Scheffler (2000:123) clarifies that mummification in Egypt began with the construction of the pyramids. Before that period the remains were cremated or interred in mastabas.

The lack of evidence of this practice may have also been related to cultic thought or belief about the dead but this cannot be conclusively known. Communities practicing embalming or some method of preserving the body seem to accentuate their belief in the afterlife. It is apparent through this tradition that the attempt is being made to extend the individual’s existence in the physical form.

#### **4.4 ADORNMENTS**

Overall, body treatments are an informative indicator of how families and communities cared for members upon their death. A part of that procedure often involved adorning the body with jewelry, or making sure the deceased would have the necessary items to ensure the passage to the afterlife would have been accomplished with relative ease and that they would have been better prepared for the journey. Jewelry is technically considered part of the contents of the graves, but it is so closely associated with the body itself, it will be dealt with here rather than in the chapter devoted to grave contents. Jewelry is thus seen as a part of the way a body was prepared for interment and will be treated as such in this chapter.

This section of the chapter explores in part how the ancient people, buried in graves associated with Philistine material remains, were prepared for their arduous voyage. It seems the ancient peoples gained a sense of dignity or self-respect in this practice. Because of the regularity of the appearance of jewelry in the graves this must have been viewed as an important custom.

It is apparent from burial evidence that adorning the body was an important task of someone during the procedure of burial. Many bodies were adorned with bracelets, beads, and other similar items. It will be seen from a closer examination of the evidence that these ancient people took pride in their appearance even in death. It is significant to note that such care was taken for the deceased. There must be some indication here as to how they may have viewed life, if even in death the bodies were adorned in this way. Even the simple graves contained articles of jewelry giving adornment to the individuals buried there. It may be that the type of grave chosen by a particular community at a particular time was due somewhat to geological or some other practical reason, but the amount of offerings and jewelry could seem to reflect more the thought patterns of the people involved.

Jewelry was found in all nine of the pit graves at Azor. The grave offerings were usually located near the head or right hand. Burial D8 contained a bronze bracelet, while burial D15 contained a mirror and some silver. It is unclear what the silver may have been used for, but it has been found in other graves as well. It would seem to reflect some level of wealth to have had silver at all, and to find it located in burials such as this seems to indicate the possible belief that the individual would have continued in need of such attire beyond death. It even more certainly highlights the affection families expressed for their loved ones upon their death. The ancient peoples were very much like modern societies. They grieved their losses and dealt with them however they could. Perhaps the giving of a piece of valuable jewelry was cathartic.

In curious contrast to these simple graves, each of which contained jewelry, the cist graves at Azor show no signs of jewelry in the records provided. In fact, the

individual woman buried in cist D84 contained no objects at all, not even the typical bowl, which will be discussed at greater length as to its significance in another section of this paper. The other cist graves appear to be quite well provisioned with pottery, but lack jewelry. One individual, buried in a cist labeled K10, was buried with a large four-handled storejar and smaller pottery vessels, apparently lacking jewelry.

The bench tombs at Tell Aitun have revealed a concern for the adornment of the body in the afterlife. In Tomb C1 it becomes apparent that these communities took pride in their post-life appearance. Included in this context was a pair of copper earrings, bracelets, rings, and a collection of pottery and other items. The rounded repository was about three feet deep and was located in the corner of the floor of the tomb. Bloch-Smith (1992:171) reports that there were three arcosolia located in this particular tomb. She also indicated that one of the individuals buried in a later level was wearing a copper bracelet. Within this context the two phases of the development of Philistine pottery was visible which supports the Philistine connection to this burial site. These later period burials are also placed in the supine position.

#### **4.5 SECONDARY BURIALS**

A crucial facet of this study on body treatments is the secondary burial. It will be demonstrated in this section of the chapter how the Philistine culture may have utilized this particular burial custom and perhaps influenced others to do the same. The common and enduring use of this practice will also be illustrated, along with some possible suggestions as to the thought behind these secondary burials. The use of these burials may also be traced in any number of cultures relating to the ancient world of the Old Testament. Meyers (1970:15) highlights the biblical concept of being “gathered to one’s fathers” and suggests it be considered in the context of secondary burials.

Some historical background of this practice will be briefly outlined in order to give a sense of its durability. Suggestions scholars have made regarding the use of these burials and its development throughout the centuries will be offered in order to enhance the comprehension of their use.

Davis (1988:194) draws from Kenyon’s work at Jericho when he cites Neolithic skulls found there as one of the earliest examples of secondary burials. These secondary burials are a part of the communal system of sharing tombs. He describes how in the secondary burial that many times the bones of the previous interment were simply pushed out of the way to make room for the new occupant. According to M. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:111-112) there is evidence of early forms of this practice in Late Bronze Age tombs in Canaan.

There is also traceable and well attested evidence for the practice of communal burials, with accompanying secondary types, from Mycenaean tombs. Meyers (1970:12) affirms the cultural connection, stating that 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.”

This practice stands in contrast to the burials found in context with Philistine pottery east of Azor. The Azor graves studied here appear to have been single burials in which only one individual occupied each interment site. This visible contrast of tomb types from Iron Age I again may reflect the traceable symbiosis occurring at that time. Evidence of communal burials within a Philistine frame of reference was also found at Tell Aitun. In the bench tomb labeled C1, Bloch-Smith (1992:171) states that along one of the walls of the tomb a pile of earlier grave offerings six feet high was found. This particular bit of data seems to challenge Cooley’s (1968:85) suggestion that there is no evidence that deposits were ever added after the initial interment. Though this may certainly be the case in most instances, the one mentioned above may be an exception. The last community to use this tomb appear to have pushed the earlier remains into this large pile to make room for the new interment. The later burials are easily distinguished since they were found *in situ*.

Continuing in the chronology of secondary burials, Davis (1988:194) seems to relate that by the Iron Age special repositories were being used to contain the bones from earlier interments of the previous generation, instead of just pushing them to the side or piling them in another area of the tomb. Curiously, Bienkowski (1982:86) suggests that the sporadic evidence of cremation may actually have been the disposing of bones that were in the way, or had become a “nuisance.” This method would then have made room for new interments, and would have been a type of secondary burial. That is to say, the

bones would have been burned instead of stacked or relocated, to make room for the next burial.

Bone collection is traceable through the centuries and even to much earlier periods, as indicated in the discussion on the ossuaries. Meyers' 1970 research on secondary burials affirms that this practice endured from the Neolithic through the Roman period. This span of time is evidence of the enduring nature of the custom. It could be understood that variations in methodology exist from one historical period to another.

A clear example of the secondary burial custom may be identified at Gezer's Bench Tomb 59. This tomb dates to the Iron I period and fits into the scope of the definition of the target sites. Being linked to Philistine culture because of a number of Philistine vessels found in its context, it may also be loosely linked to a common Aegean background due to the rock-hewn construction. Stager (1998:162) states there is a small percentage of Philistine bichrome pottery found at this site, which again emphasizes the tenuous connection being made to Philistine culture.

In Tomb 59 the main chamber of the tomb is circular in shape with five recesses carved out of the chamber walls. One of these recesses serves as a repository. Contained in the repository, or secondary burial, were the remains of approximately thirty individuals. These individuals were buried with their bowls, and a cache of lamps. A few potsherds were also found in the context of this grave. In this same burial, according to Bloch-Smith (1992:176), it appears that some skeletal remains may have been located in bowls. The significance of the bowl in the burial customs will be

emphasized in another chapter, but here they appear to have possibly served as some type of secondary burial.

Regarding the use of the secondary burials the question must be raised somewhere along the way as to how these ancient peoples viewed the practice within the context of burial customs. M. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:111) indicates that the common Late Bronze Age practice of “haphazardly” pushing the earlier bones aside to make room for the new burial, gave way to the trend toward individual burials rather than communal. Meyers (1970:15) stresses that this practice does not have to be seen as harsh treatment, since the emphasis is on burying the dead with ancestors.

Craffert (1999:43) asserts that a change in the structure of the tombs used by a certain culture would reflect a change in the way they were thinking about the dead and their existence in the afterlife. This could be an area where this suggestion may apply. It is likely that there were a number of factors influencing the transition from communal to individual burials. Geological factors and other practical concerns may have influenced this change as much as ideology.

Craffert (1999:28) makes an interesting distinction between the flesh and the bones within the burial context applicable to the study here. Noting M. Dothan’s observation, it seems possible that the ancient peoples made the same distinction. It appears greater care was provided for the body before decomposition had taken place than for the bones afterward. This discussion again echoes Cooley’s thesis, also referenced in Bloch-Smith (1992:19n), in which the concept of a journey to the netherworld is expected in the minds of the ancient people. Meyers (1970:16) seems to

think that the care would have continued beyond the ex-carnation period, and that any suggestion to the contrary should be rejected.

One pattern might be as follows: upon death the deceased individual would set out on the course that would eventually lead them to their final destination. This journey was assisted by the living as they prepared the body for burial and cared for it once interred. The feeding of the dead was a part of this rite. The living would insure that food and water were available for the deceased until the flesh was decomposed. This would have marked the successful arrival of the departed one into the netherworld.

Craffert (1999:50) affirms that the concept of resurrection was a later development that probably did not come to the surface of theological thinking until some time in the Post-Exilic period of the Old Testament. The fact that repositories for secondary burials have been found at sites within the Philistine context, gives credibility to the suggestion that they followed much of the same kind of thought patterns as did the other cultures around them at that time.

Secondary burials support the symbiotic model. This model, however, should not be misunderstood to be suggesting that all cultures were alike in every way, in some form of monolithic structure. It can be envisioned through the material data, in fact, that each culture made its own unique contributions to the world of the Old Testament. The variations within the burial contexts of the Philistines will not allow for a single pattern of Philistine burials to emerge. It is true though that there are enough parallels to trace similar customs from one location to the next. While the peoples of Iron Age I Canaan were unique in their own ways, there are enough commonalities to see connections between them.

#### **4.6 BURIAL EVIDENCE AND BODIES**

The burial evidence presented in this section seems to confirm that these ancient peoples had some fairly intense views regarding the afterlife. This is traceable in the handling of the bodies of deceased family members. A few examples will be presented here. Gezer Tomb 58, which included the feature of a carved out repository as an annex to its circular shaped main chamber also included the remains of men of various ages, an older person of unspecified sex, and a woman. Within the context of Tomb 58 there were bodies “scattered throughout” according to Bloch-Smith’s report (1992:176). In contrast Tomb 59 showed evidence of skeletal remains being collected in ceramic vessels for what appears to be secondary burial purposes.

The skeletal remains scattered in Tomb 58 complicates the process of interpreting how these ancient peoples handled their dead. More typically they appear to have used great care, such as can be seen by the collecting of the remains in ceramic vessels as in tomb 59. It could be argued that something could have disturbed the burial in antiquity.

Wild animals or grave looters could have made their way into the tomb and taken jewelry or other burial contents of value, and left the human remains in a shambles when they left.

At Gezer Tomb 9, which is also a bench tomb dating to the Iron I period, there is a similar picture imagined. Bloch-Smith (1992:176) provides the data which reveals that, though the benches were provided, the skeletal remains were on the floor with a collection of burial offerings. It is generally established in the bench tombs, that the bodies were laid on the benches during interment and would have remained there until decomposition was complete and then moved to the repository. In this instance, the bodies did not seem to get the regular burial treatment from the very beginning. Whether a pattern may be traced at Gezer is unknown at this time, but it is curious that these two tombs (58 and 9) at the same location and in similar historical contexts reflect the same unconventional practice.

It seems highly irregular and unlikely that the scattering of human remains ever became a part of the burial customs, and more plausible that the scattering occurred in post-burial centuries and was caused by something or someone outside the community. It is possible in the Gezer tomb context where the skeletal remains were placed on the floor, rather than scattered, that this interment could have been intentional. In this tomb the remains on the floor were accompanied by a collection of burial offerings, including arrowheads, loom weights, and a Philistine crater, indicating a purposeful interment.

Tell Aitun's bench tombs also provide material related to the treatment of bodies. In Tomb C1 which was used between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, according to Bloch-Smith (1992:171), there were the remains of more than fifteen individuals. One

particular burial labeled loculus 4 provided excavators with an undisturbed example of a bench tomb burial. In this context the careful handling of the bodies by these ancient communities can again be seen.

#### **4.7 CAUSES OF DEATH**

Information on the causes of death in ancient burials is meager. It may be possible to gain bits of related knowledge from the study of bodies. In this paper the subject is pursued mostly from a literary perspective, but this section holds out the possibilities that a pathological type of examination of the available material could provide information toward the study of Philistine burials.

Conrad (1984:281-287) has proposed an interesting and applicable interpretation to the Philistine plague described in the biblical passage of 1 Samuel chapter four. It is essentially a rebuttal to the collective consensus of modern scholarship that the plague was a predecessor to the Black Death, or bubonic plague. Conrad traces the provenance of the word “tumors” to its beginning with the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The RSV used the word “tumors” instead of “emerods” of the earlier version. He suggests that this later translation led interpreters to conclude that the plague described in the text was the bubonic plague.

There is no burial evidence to shed light on this situation, whether to show it was a type of “pneumonia,” or the more typical tumors generally accepted as the culprit that killed the residents in the Philistine cities where the captured ark was taken. Conrad (1984:282) reports that some have even suggested other solutions to this plague such as bacillary dysentery. In his article, Conrad includes a discussion on the nature of the text of 1 Samuel. He points out that it is difficult to discern the meaning of selected parts of the text in the first place, and therefore caution must be used in making any kind of interpretation.

Though no skeletal remains can be positively identified from this context, it is helpful to know that the field of paleopathology could add insight into some of the causes of death through skeletal analysis when there are human remains available for study. William Kelso is an American archaeologist working on the 17<sup>th</sup> century burials at Jamestown, Virginia, along the eastern coast of the United States. He has employed the skill of Ashley McKeown, a forensic anthropologist, to evaluate the skeletal remains at this site. Lange (2002:80) reports that detailed information such as bubonic plague, tuberculosis, and malaria can be traced through the DNA study of skeletal remains.

In order to emphasize the fact that this type of pursuit, from the physical anthropological approach, could be worth while in revealing information about these individuals, this paper again points to Sheridan’s work at St. Stephen’s monastery. An illustration can be drawn from her work that may apply to the concept being discussed (1999:610). Analyses of some of the joints of individual skeletons from the monastery have shown the evidence of arthritis. She states that the records suggest that the probable cause of the arthritis was the constant kneeling for prayer. It should be emphasized that

each context is different and comes with its own set of complications, but it can be noted that the approach of this discipline could provide some very helpful data to the study of the Philistines or any other ancient culture.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter on the treatment of bodies has focused a significant amount of its space on discussing the benefits of such a study. Body treatments in Iron Age I Canaan were fairly universal. Most individuals were placed in the grave with a few items seen as necessary to assist the deceased on their way to the netherworld, by the culture of that time, and the particular families involved in the interment. The bulk of the evidence supports the symbiotic model being upheld throughout this paper. These ancient cultures were similar in how they treated the remains of the deceased members of their communities.

This chapter has suggested some of the ways that knowledge about burial customs can be gained and how this particular area of study applies to the overall picture of Philistine burial customs. It has pursued the emphasis placed on specific body positions and directions, under the basic premise that these aspects of the burial process were important to the ancient communities. The significance of certain positions and

directions of the bodies interred can be seen in the repeated patterns of practice as has been discussed in this chapter.

Emphasis has been placed on the amount of jewelry found in the tombs under consideration, which seems to indicate something of the dignity and self-respect that these ancient peoples had for life. It has also highlighted the significance of such adornments in the afterlife. Commonly found in the tombs were a number of ceramic vessels along with the jewelry. Throughout this paper an emphasis is placed upon attempting to interpret the burial artifacts in light of how the ancient peoples may have thought about death and afterlife.

Another facet of body treatments dealt with here has been the subject of repositories or secondary burials. This chapter has outlined the development of this practice and emphasized certain key transitions identifiable along its process of change. Possible cultural origins have been presented. Pertinent discussion related to this subject has also been presented. This section of the paper has noted the variety of body treatments throughout Iron Age I burials related to the Philistines. It has also discussed how a clear comprehension of Iron I repositories in these contexts plays a part in current understanding of the peoples being considered.

A limited pursuit of the causes of death has been discussed. The lack of scientific information pertaining to the skeletal remains at the sites under consideration disallows an in-depth study to be done. Initial analysis of the archaeological information, along with some limited literary material has been considered in this section. The care and treatment of bodies is an especially sensitive matter since it is the one area in which the human remains themselves are actually dealt with. Other sections of this paper will be

discussing subjects related to the burials and perhaps connected less directly to the bodies themselves. This chapter has gotten as close as possible to the actual ancient people.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **GRAVE CONTENTS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In much the same way the previous chapter investigated human remains and the associated practice of adorning the body, this chapter will give consideration to the non-human elements and those not directly impinging on the skeletal remains. The graves under analysis are of the same contexts as the ones studied above, and focus on those from the Iron I period. This narrow scope guides the research to study only those burials dated to this period of ancient Canaan, and to those bearing some influence of Philistine culture.

There is a considerable amount of burial information, including grave contents, related to Philistine type sites that may be dated to Iron II, but that is beyond the scope of

this paper. It is worth noting that the Philistines did not simply adopt the customs of their neighbors without also contributing to the cultural milieu of those around them. Such a study would reveal the lasting influence Philistine culture had on the entire area. One example is Borowski's (1995:154) eighth century shallow bowl with the terracotta pomegranate located in its center. The vessel was found in burial 6 at Tell Halif, and Borowski suggests it is the result of Philistine influence. He states that similar pomegranates appear in Late Bronze Age Mediterranean contexts. In Iron Age Canaan comparable examples have turned up at significant Philistine sites such as Tell Qasile and Ashdod.

Pertaining to the overall Philistine influence on graves and tombs Borowski cites Edelstein, the excavator of Aitun, who echoes what has already been inferred in this paper, that the "common Judahite burial cave was a direct descendant of the Philistine tomb type, one of which appeared at Tell 'Eitun in the twelfth century BCE." At least in part, he is using the tomb style to identify the cultural connections involved here. Edelstein (1968:195) reports that a row of hewn tombs were located on a slope a few hundred meters from the Tell. Some of the pottery found was Philistine pottery dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Though this data contributes to the discussion in an earlier chapter, it is presented here because Borowski's correlation between the different pomegranate vessels builds on this suggestion.

This chapter will focus on the vessels, figurines, and other items found in the burials identified. Interpretations will be offered as to what might be understood by the presence of the items. Generally, the items found in the burials were either identifying something about the individual buried in a particular location or were items deemed by

the community to be necessary in the afterlife. There is also the possibility they may have served a specific function for the journey to the underworld.

There seems to be a critical leap necessary in the interpretative process here. At one level it may be assumed that items found in the burials were simply personal possessions of the deceased. Where then does the analysis of these items become assumptions of ancient peoples' thoughts about the afterlife? The leap is made from the basic level to the latter, and it is made cautiously and with consideration of the overall opinions expressed in the ancient writings of other peoples of that time. Herein lies a point of debate in current scholarship. How far can the material data take the researcher in the pursuit of ideologies of death? Conflicting interpretations will be presented throughout as applicable. This paper identifies burial offerings as significant indicators of thoughts about afterlife, and this chapter will continue to reflect this view.

## 5.2 VESSELS

Analysis of vessels from the burials provides information about the ancient peoples in regard to their views of the afterlife. It also reveals some information as to their artistic expression as well. Pottery forms, styles, and finishes all reflect the abilities, and possibly the inner feelings of those who made them. The pottery forms will also represent what the community had come to appreciate and expect.

Much of the pottery and other vessels in the graves under scrutiny here, may very well represent the deceased persons' level of preparation for their journey to the underworld. To some degree it may be observed that a certain amount of poignant reaction to the death of the loved one comes into play. The very fact they placed vessels in the burials communicates something of the system of thought. The particular selection of vessels may also provide insights into the perspective of the ancient peoples. An example might be, if the deceased had a certain food item they were especially fond of, or it had been typically served in a certain type of vessel, then perhaps the family would have insured that they would have such a vessel in the afterlife filled with their favorite delicacy. This provides a suggested purpose for grave offerings such as the beer jar at Azor and the large four handled storejar. The context of both of these vessels will be described in this chapter. Beyond this it is also possible that the items placed in burials may have been personal belongings of the deceased. It is also possible, as suggested by Zevit (2001:244) and others, that the vessels in the tombs may have contained aromatic agents to help cover the stench during the decomposition process.

From an overall perspective, this examination intends to observe patterns that occur repeatedly in the sites being considered. These patterns, it is argued, speak about the basic concepts of these ancient communities. This is not intended to exclude the

unique, for certainly they may say something about a particular burial or site. It would appear that the recurring patterns of pottery or practice have a more forceful voice as to the customs of the ancient people than those only turning up occasionally.

When items are rarely found, it seems the conjecture is more risky than if there is an example from multiple occurrences. It is true that in either case a certain amount of risk must be taken and realized. Nevertheless, the data can be studied and interpreted based upon what is revealed and the more they occur the more they would seem to communicate. It should be understood that the interpretations are based on mute artifactual evidence that only reveals as much as can be comprehended from the archaeological and historical setting.

The structure of this chapter is similar to those previous, in that it will begin with the pit burials and then on to what may be termed as the more complicated burials or tombs such as cists or chambers, or anthropoid coffin burials. Since there are no cemeteries to examine in any of the major Philistine cities of the Old Testament, it is important to find material that can be linked as closely as possible to Philistine culture. Bloch-Smith (1992:152) reports that in the pit graves at Azor there was a collection of pottery found that is comparable to that unearthed at the confirmed Philistine site of Tell Qasile. This, as discussed in more detail in chapter three, is a significant bit of information supporting the premise that the often elusive Philistine burial practices can be tentatively understood.

Among the cache of Philistine ceramics found at this site in Azor were bowls in the typical Philistine style. It is reported that grave D8 contained two bowl fragments. It is evident that the influence of the Philistine culture was very much present at Azor, and

there is substantial support here from the material record to conclude that the individuals buried in these graves were Philistines.

This information also seems to provide insight into their beliefs about death and afterlife. It is commonly understood in the study of ancient burials that the ceramics, particularly bowls and food containing vessels buried with the individuals in the graves, represent the ancient peoples' custom of feeding the dead. Meijer (2003:51) emphasizes that perishable material, such as food, can many times only be assumed to have been present due to deterioration. More information will be presented for discussion on this subject in chapter seven. Both the literary and the archaeological sources will give indication of this type of belief system having existed within the Canaanite symbiotic cultic structure, of which the Philistines seem to have been active participants.

In the same context at Azor, grave D9 contained jars and a jug, as well as the familiar bowl. In grave D20, as Bloch-Smith (1992:153) reports, the Philistine bowl was located near the chest of the individual buried there. Interestingly, this bowl was turned upside down. Perhaps this is evidence of a particular frame of mind in which the family may have been at the time of burial. In this seemingly unusual act it appears they were attempting to insure, in a more intense fashion than usual, that the individual would be provided the necessary nourishment during their afterlife existence. It appears the bowls and other ceramic items are normally placed on the burial floor near the body instead of resting on the body itself.



**Plate 7.** *Philistine Strainer Jug*. Photo by S. Fugitt. Courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

In a rare find from the selected Philistine settings, grave D15 contained a stone bowl near the skull of one individual buried there. This is the same grave where a mirror was found, apparently allowing the deceased to enjoy some of the same amenities in death that they had enjoyed in life. Silver was also found in this grave. Since it is not reported as having been found regularly in these contexts, it may contribute to the overall evaluation of the graves. The items found in this setting give a sense that someone of a slightly elevated social status may have been buried there.

Another interesting vessel uncovered at Azor is a large four-handled storejar. This large vessel was found in one of the cist burials labeled as K10. Bloch-Smith (1992:157) indicates that this jar was accompanied by the typical collection of bowls, which becomes an expected occurrence, to the researcher, in most of the burial settings. Again this large vessel seems to indicate a significant thought related to the afterlife. Upon interment the family, it seems, may have deemed it necessary for this individual to be provided with more than just the average sized vessels.

Regarding the meaning of this particular grave offering it seems only conjecture can give some clues. Maybe this individual was a potter who specialized in the manufacture of storejars, or as mentioned above, maybe there was a particular product or food substance stored in such a vessel that was their favorite, and the family wanted to insure that the person buried in K10 would have an adequate supply. It is apparent that each vessel placed in the burials contributes to a clearer understanding of these ancient communities. Each bit of evidence adds insight into the thinking of the ancient peoples and reflects something of how they may have viewed the life beyond corporal life.

Found in cist grave D30, according to Bloch-Smith (1992:157), was the largest amount of “complete vessels” found. Among these complete vessels were Philistine bowls and a variety of other Philistine pottery. An important observation to make at this point is that, so far, two types of tombs and their burial contents have been examined; the simple or pit, and the cist. Philistine wares have been tied to both.

Bloch-Smith (1992:154) reports that the evidence from a number of cemeteries at Tell el-Farah contained the presence of Philistine pottery. As with any pottery assemblage, some of these vessels are complete and others are fragmentary. The cemeteries were dated by the presence of Philistine pottery. The results in the dating have revealed that these burials are not confined to an Iron Age context. Some of the graves found in these cemeteries represent the Late Bronze Age context. The evidence reveals the cultural influences and transitions at Tell el-Farah. The pottery record reflects the influence of foreign culture upon the peoples living in this area during that earlier time.

The jar burials at Azor have provided helpful information for understanding the graves in the contexts under consideration. Operating under the supposition that the grave contents reflect a way of identifying the ancient peoples’ way of thinking about the afterlife, the graves at Azor considered by Bloch-Smith (1992:160) to be “poorly provisioned” should be considered at this point. One individual buried in this context is identified as a young child approximately four years of age. Some of the burials include only skulls. There are also examples of the double jar burials where two jars are joined at the mouth and the body or bodies would be placed inside the jars for burial.

The contents of child burials apparent at Azor also support the symbiotic model. Bloch-Smith (1992:68) states one such burial included a number of items along with the remains of a child. The study of this burial will indicate the variations in grave contents. There is also comparable evidence from various backgrounds to support the symbiotic concept that peoples of different cultures were burying their dead in many of the same ways. This type of comparative study can only be done in a limited fashion here, since a more thorough pursuit of cultures other than the Philistines would take this paper beyond the scope of its stated purpose.

The child found from the jar burials at Azor was from a family capable of providing items at the time of interment. This child's body was found near the scattered assemblages of graves 55 and 56 in Azor's cemetery D. Included in the burial items were a Philistine bowl, bowl fragments, a variety of other pottery, a silver bracelet, beads, and a scarab. It seems unlikely, from the observation of other graves, that all families would have possessed the types of items found in this context. This is highlighted by the fact that some of the graves in this context seem to be less provisioned.

Bloch-Smith (1992:68) has observed that adults on the whole were typically better provisioned than children, though the contents of the grave mentioned above could find precedents elsewhere. These types of burial contents would also seem to disclose something of the economic stability of these Iron Age residents of Canaan. Bloch-Smith asserts that adolescents were provisioned as adults, with a better repertoire of grave offerings than infants and younger children.

Found among the context of the jar burials of Azor was a vessel labeled as a Philistine "beer jug." This jug appeared in grave D84. The Philistine pottery here allows

a connection with Philistine culture to be made. This unusual piece may also reveal information not found in other locations. It may be conjectured that the individual buried in this site enjoyed the beverage contained in the vessel or perhaps he was the local brewer. In addition to the beer jug, Bloch-Smith (1992:161) reports that grave D84 included the basic bowl, which was common to most of the locations analyzed. Other items found in this burial were a jug, pyxix, and a skull. Unfortunately the grave had been disturbed and the burial jar was not recovered in this particular instance.

Comparable to D84, another grave identified as D87, contained Philistine ceramic wares. Unfortunately there were no skeletal remains left in D87 to study. Regardless of this fact, however, the inclusion of Philistine pottery enables this burial to support the assertion that Philistine graves may be found and studied from Azor. The Philistine pottery found in D87 was a collection of Philistine craters. Bloch-Smith (1992:161) relates that there were also jugs, bowls and a ring found in this context.

Vessels from the anthropoid coffin contexts are also applicable here. Chapter six will focus on these questionable burials, attempting to support the link that has already been made to the Philistines. For now though, the contents will be presented along with the discussion of the contents from other Philistine related sites. Though Beth Shean has yielded little Philistine pottery, there is possibly one late Philistine strainer-spout jug dating to the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 10<sup>th</sup> century. There is another vessel from Beth Shean, not in the bichrome style, that provides some interesting insights into the subject of death. The so-called “pilgrim flask” has been found in one of the tombs in the Northern cemetery. This vessel, picking up on its name, would have been an important provision for the journey to the afterlife.

The chamber tomb labeled C1 at Tell Aitun provides insight into how the burial offerings, particularly vessels, can be illuminating to this study. In Bloch-Smith's (1992:172) disclosure of the contents of this tomb a number of Philistine vessels were found. Besides the large volume of local wares, eight were made in Ashdod. This determination was made by petrographic analysis.

The significant link made here to Ashdod, one of the major Philistine sites found in the Old Testament, contributes to the association being made and the broader picture of the interconnected nature of the Philistine culture at this time in history. Though there are no cemeteries located to date at any of the more important Philistine cities, such as Ashdod, the correlation can be made by linking Ashdod to Aitun by this kind of ceramic analysis.

The popularity of Ashdod pottery is well documented from the archaeological reports associated with the excavations at that major site. M. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:127-181) provides ample data to support the picture being drawn. The image presented is that Ashdod pottery appeared in other related sites throughout the area. These vessels unearthed at Tell Aitun bearing the autograph of Ashdod, give the impression that Ashdod may have been the producer of pottery being used throughout the region.

The C1 burial also contained five Philistine jugs, as well as other related material. Among these was a bottle constructed in a Cyriot type shape, which is significant given the likely Aegean origin of the Philistines. Cyprus appears to have been home to Aegean-type cultures, and evidence is obtainable linking them in some ways to the Philistine culture. A brief discussion regarding the origin of the Philistines as one of the

groups of Sea Peoples was included in an earlier chapter. Cyprus may be viewed as a kind of bridge between the place of Philistine origin and their eventual settlement along the southern Levantine coast. Among the important points to be derived from the examination of the burial materials of tomb C1 is the fact that a connection may be made to Cyprus. This bit of evidence contributes to the model of an Aegean/Sea People-oriented origin of the Philistines which is traceable in the other areas of Philistine material, in addition to the evidence from the burials being offered.

This Cypriot connection made here is especially important since tomb C1 is dated to the Iron Age I period. This is the time of settlement for a significant contingent of Philistines in Canaan discussed throughout the paper in various sections, mentioned by Ramesses III on the temple walls at Medinet Habu, and supported by the archaeological evidence in ancient Israel. A part of the motivating purpose of this project has been to support the previously established Aegean origin of the Philistines. The fact that in this burial setting, Philistine material appeared along with the Cypriot wares strengthens the connection already made.

Three tombs from Gezer will be submitted for consideration here. These tombs are identified by Dever (1993:504) as Macalister's tombs 9 upper, 58 upper, and 59 upper. The bench tomb identified as Tomb 9 provides additional support for the broader context of scattered burials beyond the major Philistine sites in ancient Israel. Tomb 9 contained an interesting variety of vessels, including a Philistine crater. Bloch-Smith (1992:175) and T. Dothan (1982:52) both identify the presence of this vessel. The significance of this particular crater may be in the variety of other pottery found alongside it. As in other sites, vessels from different cultures were located here. These

types of assemblages support the pattern of intercultural exchange that is seen during the Iron Age I at the locations under consideration.

This single Philistine crater found at Gezer Tomb 9, by itself, is not convincing evidence that this site is necessarily connected culturally to the Philistines. As with any bit of information gathered, it should be substantiated by other supporting evidence before any kind of conclusions can be made or interpretations can be offered. However, Philistine pottery has been found in several burials at Gezer. Tombs 58 and 59, both dated to the Iron Age I period contained a variety of Philistine pottery. Both of these tombs are of the chambered type as already discussed.

Waldbaum's (1966:335) assertion concerning the Mycenaean origin of rock-cut tombs focuses on the rectangular or trapezoidal shape. In fact, Gezer Tomb 58 appears to fit Loffreda's type 'CC' (Davis 1988:185), one of the circular shaped rock-cut chambers. As discussed in an earlier section of this paper on tomb types, however, Waldbaum (1966:334) argues primarily for the rectangular shape as being the Aegean contribution to this practice, not the circular more Canaanite versions. This seems to be a point that at times is not clearly articulated in the rebutting of Waldbaum's presentation (Bloch-Smith 1992:47).

The Gezer tombs 58 and 59, though they are rock-cut chambered tombs, being circular rather than rectangular in shape will either challenge a Philistine connection, or shed new light on Philistine burial customs. Though these may vary from the Mycenaean style, the Gezer tombs considered here have ample amounts of Philistine pottery to warrant their inclusion in the discussion.

Bloch-Smith (1992:176) reports that tomb 58 included a large number of chalices, a pilgrim flask, juglet or bowl, and a lamp, plus a variety of Philistine and Mycenaean wares. Lamps have been discovered in a number of contexts, not just Philistine. Based on Cooley's observations (1968:88) it appears there is ample evidence to show that lamps such as these would have been burnt after their installation in the tomb. The inclusion of lamps as a part of the tomb repertoire found in tomb 58 contributes to an understanding of these ancient peoples' view of the afterlife. This will be especially highlighted under the discussion of the tomb contents from Gezer tomb 59 below. It is also significant at this point that there were vessels representing both the Philistine and the Mycenaean traditional ceramics in tomb 58. As T. Dothan traced the origin and path of the Philistine pottery of Iron Age Canaan, she made the connection back through the Mycenaean imitation to the Mycenaean pottery before that. With some traceable contributions from other cultural influences, it appears that the earlier Mycenaean style eventually evolved into what would become Philistine bichrome ware. Perhaps a clearer way to say it would be that Philistine bichrome pottery evolved out of Mycenaean antecedents, picking up other cultural contributions along the way.

It is quite significant then that there would be a site in which both Mycenaean and Philistine pottery would turn up in a burial context in the archaeological data. The combination of pottery, which represents a critical transition in the evolution of what would become Philistine pottery, would seem to indicate a longer history of Philistine type cultures. From researching Bloch-Smith's (1992:152-179) reports of the burial contents, it seems that this combination of pottery can be traced to two Iron Age I sites;

Gezer and Lachish. Lachish should be approached cautiously, however, due to the lack of evidence of occupational building activity during the period (Tufnell 1993:743).

Within the discussion of the context of tomb 58 at Gezer, it would seem appropriate to mention the large number of chalices found. Eating and drinking vessels will also be brought up for discussion in chapter seven, which will focus on literary implications. Because of their connection to the cult of the dead and particularly the feeding of the dead, these vessels may contribute to a clearer understanding of these ancient communities. The common occurrence of food and drink type vessels in the burials researched here supports the concept of the death cult. It seems apparent these ancient peoples were committed to the care and veneration of their deceased loved ones.

Meijer (2003:51) reports that from the Mesopotamian and Syrian context such perpetual contact would be beneficial for the living and the dead, but especially the living. What better way to maintain this contact than to continue the regular rituals. In this chapter it is important to identify as many of the varieties of vessels as possible, in order to clarify the broader picture of what burials within the context of Philistine material culture would have looked like. Such evidence is important to add to this overall picture. Each bit of the evidence must be added as a part of the puzzle being pieced together to provide the most extensive view.

Gezer Tomb 59 is comparable in some ways to Tomb 58. It is similar in tomb type, with both being of the circular shape with recesses carved out of the walls around the perimeter. Tomb 59 contains five recesses while Tomb 58 only has two. In each instance, one recess is dedicated to functioning as the repository. Both tombs date to the

Iron Age I period. Bloch-Smith (1992:176) includes in her report of Tomb 59 that over one hundred different vessels were found there.

Of the one hundred vessels found in Tomb 59, forty of them were lamps. This evidence stands in contrast to the contents of Tomb 58 where only one lamp was found. A parallel may be drawn between the two tombs since both included lamps, but the contrast in the number of lamps in each context is striking, and may reflect a variation in the thinking of the residents of Gezer from one context to the next. The obvious overbalance of the number of lamps in Tomb 59 at least reflects one particular community's focus on light. At this point it is likely impossible to discern the particulars of the logic at interment.

Initially, it would appear that the overwhelming presence of these lamps would demonstrate something about the ancient peoples' concept of the unknown darkness of the afterlife, and the need of the deceased to obtain light for their journey to the underworld. Death was apparently viewed as an obscure realm where darkness dominated light. Therefore, the only way to navigate its unknown territory successfully was for the deceased to receive the assistance of the living. This type of interpretation would not be limited to lamps, but could apply to many aspects of burial contents.

Beyond this interpretation a more practical one may be suggested. As a part of the care for the deceased and the tombs, family members would have needed light. This may have a connection to necromancy, or communication with the dead, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven. Practically speaking they would have simply taken the light with them as they entered the tomb with food, beverage, or other

necessary items. This idea seems to have more credibility in Gezer Tomb 58 where only one lamp was found in the context along with Philistine and Mycenaean pottery.

This latter interpretation would be strengthened if lamps had only been found in chamber type tombs. The fact is, several were found in other types of burials. At least three lamps were found in cist type burials at Azor (Bloch-Smith 1992:153;157). These finds tend to give credibility to the concept that the offerings were being made for the benefit of the deceased rather than for the advantage of the living in fulfilling their duties in the cult of the dead or by inquiring of the dead for knowledge unknown to the living.

Gezer Tomb 59 on the other hand reflects such a different image with its large volume of lamps, that this interpretation faces some serious limitations. While it may have met a practical need to have taken the lamp into the tomb for the purpose of visibility, it seems highly unlikely that forty of them would have been necessary for the purpose of fulfilling their ancestral obligations to the deceased. When considering Tomb 59 the question may be raised as to why there were such a large number of lamps. The emotional state of the family at the time of a particular interment could at least partially account for the large number of lamps. Even if it may represent a burial rite of some type, it cannot be seen as a developing pattern in the graves under consideration. An assemblage of this magnitude does not appear in any of the other burials examined in this research.

Another possible suggestion may be that individuals interred in Tomb 59 had some connection to the lamp or oil industry. The major Philistine site of Tell Mique Ekron has been shown to have been a leader in olive oil production throughout the ancient Near East during a later period of time. Gitin (1995:61-79) has presented an

extensive report of the Iron II, Assyrian period Ekron. He describes the Ekronites as producing more olive oil than anyone else throughout the region at that time. According to Gitin (1995:63) the excavation at Ekron uncovered 105 olive oil installations.

It may be that the skill, knowledge, and predisposition toward olive oil production were present among the communities such as Gezer that were related to the earlier Philistines. Even though they would not have produced amounts of oil to the degree they did in the later period, they would have at least produced enough for their use. The same suggestion may be made for a potter being buried with a wide assortment of wares. In addition to the forty lamps found in Gezer burial Tomb 59, there was also a variety of Philistine pottery included with pottery of assorted backgrounds.

An important aspect of the study of any tomb is the repository and their contents, whether skeletal or otherwise. The repository of Tomb 59 included the remains of thirty different individuals, along with five of the forty lamps discussed above, and potsherds. While the skeletal remains were dealt with in the previous chapter, it is mentioned again at this point in order to emphasize the contrast in this particular setting between human remains and the other types of nonhuman contents. It is worth noting that in this repository the amount of skeletal contents is proportionately high compared to the nonhuman elements. This would also seem to support the idea that the human remains were treated differently once decomposition had run its complete course, as was discussed in the chapter on body treatments.

### 5.3 FIGURINES

The few figurines found within the context of Philistine burials likely exemplify some aspect of the cult of the dead, and may assist in the comprehension of how the ancient peoples viewed death and afterlife. These particular expressions will also affirm the symbiotic model once again. Some degree of comparison with other ancient communities in Iron Age I Canaan and beyond must be drawn in order for this model to be seen. A limited comparison will be made here in order to get a sense for the cultural balance evident throughout this formative period of history. The different influences present in the burial settings of the Philistines can also be identified in some measure through this type of analysis.

Stager (1998:153) points to figurines to affirm the link between the Philistines and their Mycenaean predecessors. The common worship of a mother-goddess is shared by both of these peoples and is evident in the material records. To support this connection, Stager has identified other areas that can be paralleled. He cites the common food preferences which were discussed in more detail in chapter four. The affinities to weaving as was seen in Ashkelon can also be cited as lending credibility to this cultural connection. Tomb 9 at Tell Gezer provides additional evidence with the presence of loom weights in the burial setting. Besides this kind of evidence there is the well-known

pottery connection between the Philistines and Mycenaean culture established by T. Dothan (1982) in her work with the Philistine material culture. Architecturally, Stager also highlights the “hearth” commonly found throughout Mycenaean locations and also at Philistine sites in Canaan such as Ekron and Qasile. Qasile excavator A. Mazar (1993:1208) affirms this connection, citing parallels to the hearth in Anatolia, Cyprus, and the Aegean world. Curiously, Coulanges (1955:25) linked the hearth to the “sacred fire” of the Greek family, extinguished only when the entire family had perished. It seems the most significant figurine linking the Philistines to the Aegean was found in a public building near the sacred area. No graves were found at the site but these finds help solidify the cultural connection.

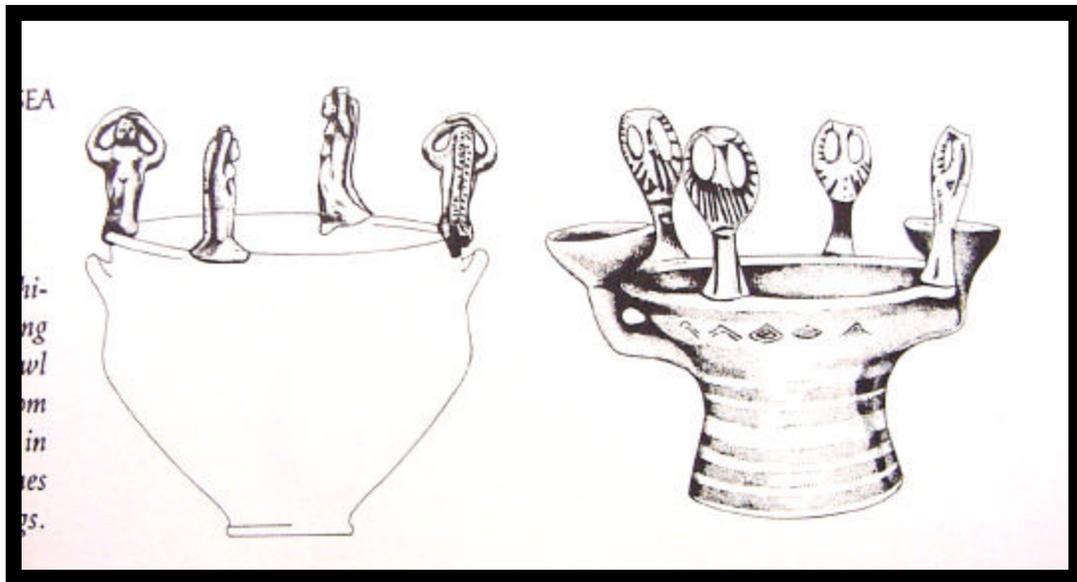
Some of the most significant figurines for the pursuit of the cultural affinities of the Philistines as reflected in the burial context are the female mourning figurines found in a grave at Tell Aitun. T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:200) cites these figurines as a link between the Philistines and the Aegean. She (1992:201) is able to connect these to comparable figurines on the Greek mainland. Similar mourners, found on the top of a large tomb vessel, were found at tombs at Perati. It is reported that the excavator believed they were placed in the tombs as “physical representations of the mourner’s grief.”

Following the cue provided by this suggestion, it may be expounded that these mourning figurines may have been cathartic in nature. It appears that anything placed in the grave for the purpose of self-expression or community-expression would have served such a purpose. The presence of mourning figurines provides an indication of a community’s way of coping with the perplexities of death. As in any culture, death is a

reminder of human limitations, both individual and societal. How cultures cope with death, both theologically and practically, gives an indication of their awareness of these limitations.

A peoples' method of expression may also reflect their understanding of these limitations. It can be argued that every funerary custom employed by a particular culture is cathartic, and it seems especially true of mourning figurines. These burial offerings would have given the mourners an avenue of expression in their grief. Symbolic of the inward feelings of the bereaved, the figures define these feelings for the entire community, expressing and exposing their personal grief in a tangible and even possibly a public way. In turn, this visible expression would allow the community to enter into the grief of the moment, thereby making it a societal concern and a community event, rather than merely the limited experience of an individual or family.

Families would leave these figurines, along with other burial goods, in the tombs, perhaps as a reminder to the deceased, but most certainly to themselves, that the grief of that moment would not be forgotten. In this way, mourning could continue indefinitely, even while the rest of the community carried on with life. In this way the living were perhaps alleviated somewhat from a sense of responsibility to continue the mourning process. As far as who the figurines may have represented, Meijer (2003:57) suggests the figurines may have symbolized the dead, and forever maintained its representation in incorruptible form. He also distinguishes between such figurines and those representing deities or ancestors.



**Plate 8.** *Sketch of Philistine mourning vessel and figurines, and comparable vessel from Perati, Greece*  
Dothan and Dothan (1992:202)

Howard (1998:249) indicates that the custom of naked mourning figurines was typical of most Canaanite versions. He also states, as was affirmed by T. Dothan, that there are Mycenaean characteristics visible in these figures as well. He points to the position of the arms as this connection. It can be seen in plate 7 above that the arms are raised in both depictions. The Mycenaean version appears to be somewhat stylized, but the posture is clearly identifiable.

The style of vessels and placement of the attached figurines, as seen around the circular rim of the Aitun vessel, seems to lend something to the discussion as well. Around the mourners go, each one following in tandem with the others, continuing their solemn vigil throughout the process of time. In so doing, such figurines may have served a cathartic purpose regarding the possible guilt experienced by mourners for not continuing to grieve after the passage of time. In this way, mourning would continue

even after the family's life had found a new form of normalcy. All the while, however, the deceased could know that they would not be forgotten.

Another applicable point to be made is that the figurines, as stated above, were female. Cooley (1968:67-68) emphasizes the role of women in the Canaanite context of mourning. It would appear that such a custom was common throughout the Mediterranean world. He (1968:69) also includes discussion on dancing mourners, which obviously applies to the situation at hand. His comments are related to the Ugaritic texts concerning the death of Aqhat, which seem to reflect a sense of cultural practice.

It is important to observe what appears in the burial settings, but it is also important to observe what does not appear. Of the burials analyzed within a Philistine-type context very few examples of figurines have been found. It is seen in the few discussed that some of the most intense cultural influences will be Egyptian or Mycenaean. This Mycenaean example is found in a setting that is representative of the combination of the Aegean and Philistine cultural mix. It will be emphasized here that the Philistines incorporated Mycenaean figurines into their cultic system as a continuation of their historical cultural expression. There is archaeological evidence to show that they did have such expressions of art and cult, as seen in Plate 7.

It is significant to note the Egyptian influence at a number of the sites considered and also presented here. Given such an influence, it may be possible to connect figurines at these locations and their contexts to the Egyptian ushabtis. Lesko (2000:1773) describes the purpose of the ushabtis in the Egyptian way of thinking, which as he states, was derived from the sixth chapter of the *Book of the Dead*. When the deceased would

be called upon to perform a task, the ushabti could serve in their place. Perhaps a similar interpretation can be given to the vessels discussed here.

Beyond the fact that figurines were a part of Philistine culture, there is evidence to support the idea that they brought their own worship of the mother-goddess with them into Canaan in the twelfth century. One of best examples is the “Ashdoda,” thus called by M. Dothan, the excavator of Ashdod. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:156) gave it this name because it so well represented the early Philistine culture of Ashdod, one of the five major cities of the Philistines in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Mazar (1993:1211) also identified Ashdoda fragments at Qasile.

The Ashdoda is associated with the Philistines’ Mycenaean origin. It is observably a goddess of fertility, which was of utmost importance to the ancient peoples of an agrarian society. Unfortunately, no Ashdoda have been found in any of the burial sites examined. It should be remembered that no cemeteries have been explored at any of the cities of the Philistine Pentapolis. It would be very illuminating if a large necropolis was to be discovered at one of these sites currently being excavated, such as Ashkelon or Gath/Tell es-Safi. Until that time, images of Philistine burial customs will be confined to the bits and pieces of information that can be drawn from the scattered graves throughout the area.



**Plate 9.** *Ashdoda*. M. Dothan 1992:155

The image of Philistine culture which fits the archaeological picture is that they came from the Aegean into Canaan early in the twelfth century. Initially they were largely a Mycenaean based culture, first appearing with a monochrome pottery which reflected this influence. In time they began to adapt to the surroundings and incorporate various expressions of other cultures, namely Egyptian and Canaanite. Since the focus of this paper is upon the Iron Age I burials of the Philistines, evidence of this influence is observable in the pottery record, and a cultural merging can be traced throughout the burial contexts under consideration.

The heavy influence of Egyptian culture present in the tombs under consideration may be due to the fact that Egypt had maintained supremacy over the entire area for centuries. It may also be partly due to the fact that there was a long-standing trade network in the Mediterranean world between the peoples of Egypt, the Aegean, and other areas throughout this region.

A group of Egyptian type representations and pendants were found in one of the tombs at Beth Shean. Bloch-Smith (1992:164) includes that the Egyptian pantheon was represented well in this one context. Present were Bes, Ptah, and others not named. The connection of these coffins with the Philistines is questioned by some, as will be discussed in the next chapter devoted to the customs of clay coffin burials. The affinities of these coffins to the Philistine culture will be outlined at that time, as well as the cautions.

Another figurine was found in a burial setting at Tell Gezer. According to a survey of Bloch-Smith's (1992:176) data from this excavation, Tomb 58 contained one figurine. This figurine is a nondescript burial offering with no recorded details as to its likeness or cultural connections. In this tomb, it may be remembered, the bodies were scattered about the inside of the circular rock-cut area. Besides the variety of Philistine and Mycenaean pottery, knives of flint and iron were also found. There has been a time in the recent past that the inclusion of iron in the archaeological context would have contributed to the Philistine origin. This assumption is no longer made since it has been discovered that iron appears in other settings as well as Philistine.

Tomb 59 contained a Bes amulet, as described by Bloch-Smith (1992:176). This Egyptian-style image is found in the chamber tomb at Gezer along with the human remains, lamps, and a variety of Philistine pottery. Knapp (1988:107) describes Bes as a dwarf household deity of marriage and domestic happiness. Significant to the study of burials, he states that Bes may have been the god "of revered ancestors, past kings, and officials." This is helpful for an understanding of its use in the burial context at Gezer. It can be imagined that these ancient people likely revered their ancestors and thus would

have invoked the assistance of this Egyptian goddess in the care of their existence in the afterlife.

Among the burial contents in the anthropoid clay coffin setting at the Northern cemetery at Beth Shean, Bloch-Smith (1992:164) relates that there were Mycenaean III female figurines. The context of these figurines is otherwise quite Egyptian in nature. These types of items seem to support the evidence that the influence of Egyptian thought was very present in this location. This presence of intercultural exchange provides further evidence for the symbiotic model being pursued in this paper.

As far as an explanation of the nature of the individuals who lived in the Egyptian influenced sites in Iron Age I Canaan such as Beth Shean, perhaps T. Dothan's (Dothan and Dothan 1992:208) solution is as accurate as possible. She has identified these ancient residents as Philistines who had adopted Egyptian funerary practices. She suggests they may have been either mercenaries or civilians living in this location. This Egyptian influence is not surprising given the fact that Egypt had controlled the Levant and a large area of land and cultures for the better part of four centuries up to the period under consideration in this paper.

It is evident at Egyptian-influenced Deir el-Balah, as T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:208) points out, that Philistines made their way into the area in the twelfth century and began to settle there. She has identified, from her archaeological efforts at Deir el-Balah, Philistine bichrome pottery in pits dug into the previous levels of occupation. This helps to track the settlement phase of Philistines at this location to the twelfth century. It is noteworthy due to the fact that burials have been found at both Deir

el-Balah and Beth Shean, two sites which are connected to Philistine culture that both contain anthropoid coffins.

All in all there is not a large volume of information regarding the inclusion of figurines in the burials under scrutiny. What has been found has added insight as to the outside cultural influence on the customs pertaining to burial. As has been seen in other areas of the material presented, there are two predominant external influences on the burials of the Philistines—Mycenaean and Egyptian. The rock-cut chamber tombs were traced to the Mycenaean culture and the anthropoid clay coffins of the Philistines will carry the influence of the Egyptian culture. The former were discussed in the chapter on burials and tombs, and the latter will be the topic of discussion in the next chapter which will focus exclusively on this interesting and controversial burial custom.

#### **5.4 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

This section of the paper provides a niche for the other items found in the graves under consideration. These items will not have occurred often enough to have developed any sort of pattern in these contexts. Most of the burial contents, other than human remains, were pottery items with apparent affiliations with the cult of the dead, or jewelry for personal adornment in the afterlife. Both of these classes of items would have been seen as serving a useful purpose in death. They would have been included in the burial to assist the deceased in their journey to the next world.

As seen in the preceding section, the tombs reflecting greater Egyptian influence included items more overtly related to the spirit world of Egyptian deities such as Nephthys, Isis and Osiris. Bloch-Smith (1992:166) and T. Dothan (1982:276) both emphasize this particular influence on the burials at Lachish. In Cave 570, a tomb at Lachish, Bloch-Smith reports that one anthropoid coffin was inscribed with hieroglyphics in the Egyptian style. There were also scarabs and two Uzat eyes found in this context. Interestingly, and the main reason this burial is discussed here, the tomb was dated by the Philistine pottery found in its context to the Iron Age I period.

In a similar fashion as seen at Lachish, Beth Shemesh's Cave 11 included two scarabs, both of Ramesses III, along with Egyptian pottery. Another setting where a scarab appears is at the jar burials of Azor. Bloch-Smith (1992:160) states that one scarab was found in a burial when there were not a lot of other items. This was one of the burials identified as "poorly provisioned." It seems significant that in the grave of this small child that the scarab would have been the dominant feature among the offerings. This scarab may belong to the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

Continuing in the material showing Egyptian influence, there were some miscellaneous items found in the tombs at Beth Shean. Bloch-Smith (1992:164) reports a gold mouthpiece, a fiddle-shaped game board, along with the expected scarabs, seals, amulets, and other items reflecting the influence of Egyptian culture. As with any burial offerings the meaning of these items may only be imagined. It appears that the deceased was going to be allowed the pleasure of a leisure-time activity in the afterlife. Perhaps they would be allowed the pleasure of a game they may have enjoyed in life. The gold mouthpiece finds a parallel in the well-known Grave 63 at Azor, the only cremation

within the burials connected with the Philistines presented in this study. This mouthpiece has an elusive origin. Brug (1985:153) traced variations of this item throughout the area and concluded that the origin of these particular types of burial accouterments would either have originated in the Mycenaean or Egyptian culture. The context of this one at Beth Shean would seem to favor the Egyptian origin.

One of the sites yielding the greatest diversity of items is Tell Gezer. Tomb 9, one of Gezer's rock-cut bench tombs, included loom weights, which were reminiscent of Ashkelon's weaving operation. Loom weights have been found in significant quantities at the Ashkelon site giving a sense that this industry may have been an important ingredient in its economy.

Arrowheads were also found at Gezer's tomb 9. Perhaps this was the grave of a hunter, a warrior, or someone else in need of a weapon in the afterlife. Whatever the case, the possibilities for the use of these items differ from the implications provided in the vessels. The bowls, jars and other containers would have held nourishment for the deceased, whereas the arrowheads would not have satisfied any immediate need. The jewelry assumed a different purpose altogether, in that it allowed for personal adornment.

At Gezer Tomb 58, one of the circular tombs, possibly fitting Loffreda's type 'CC,' a variety of items are catalogued. Bloch-Smith (1992:176) states that individuals buried there were equipped with finger rings, ivory bars, alabaster saucers, and knives of flint and iron. Some items are more practical in nature, and are likely included in the tomb to make the afterlife existence more convenient for the deceased. Apparent luxury items such as ivory bars may have been included for the individual's enjoyment, or for some undetermined reason. The inclusion of knives may be similar to the arrowheads

mentioned above and could have been a weapon or a tool to assist the deceased in their journey.

Pertaining to the knives found at Gezer Tomb 58, some were also found in the Tell el-Farah tombs. M. Dothan (1992:67) relates that two daggers were included in one of the rock-cut tombs dating to the eleven hundreds. The date has been provided by the presence of Philistine pottery. One of the daggers was made of iron and the other of bronze. Curiously, the iron dagger was snapped in two, while the bronze dagger was in tact. Perhaps these were the graves of warriors, buried with their weapons at their side.

Gezer Tomb 59 revealed a fascinating display of contents besides the ordinary as mentioned earlier. Bloch-Smith (1992:176) lists an ivory comb along with the other items contained in this context. This item could have been dealt with in the section on jewelry since it has primarily to do with personal appearance and grooming. The ancient peoples must have thought it important enough to include this item of personal hygiene in the burial to allow their loved one a simple pleasure.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to describe the burial contents found in the target sites. It has been described that the overall purpose of grave contents was an essential expression of a peoples' understanding of life after death. These tangible expressions reflect the inner thoughts and values of a particular culture, and in that sense provide a means for the evaluation of their thoughts regarding this subjective and often obscure area of their existence.

Much of the discussion has focused on the vessels contained in the graves. This is justified by the fact that the most common item found in the graves are vessels, primarily bowls. Some of the possible uses of these vessels have been suggested. The vessels were usually buried near the individual interred. They have been found located near the head or hand so as to be conveniently grasped. The importance of vessels is highlighted in the fact that the individuals would have been provided nourishment in the afterlife.

The inclusion of jewelry in the grave was also pointed out in this chapter. Jewelry was commonly found in these graves, giving indication that personal adornment was important to these ancient peoples, even after death. The living family appeared to be entrusted with the responsibility of insuring that the deceased had all the necessary items for enhanced personal appearance and perhaps even hygiene in the afterlife.

The importance of figurines was discussed, though their scarcity from actual burials in this study was emphasized. The figurines reveal cultural affinities, since they tend to be related to the cult. The few images dealt with in this chapter focused on the

two dominate cultural influences on the formation of Iron I Philistine culture—  
Mycenaean and Egyptian.

These major areas of burial contents have been presented herein. In addition to these contents, the miscellaneous burial items have been presented and discussed. It is worth repeating at this point that the number of burials that show an influence of Philistine culture is somewhat limited and, therefore, there is not a large amount of items to consider. There are enough items to be discussed, but a critical drawback to the pursuit is the fact that patterns may be more difficult to trace when there are not as many grave items to evaluate. Hopefully, the image of Philistine culture has been enhanced by the presentation of the available items discussed in this chapter, and as more data is uncovered in Philistine sites this image will continue to become clearer.

There is a considerable amount of burial information related to Philistine type sites that date to the Iron Age II period, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. Such a study, however, would appear to emphasize the lasting influence the Philistine culture had on the entire area.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **ANTHROPOID COFFINS: CAN THEY BE CALLED PHILISTINE?**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter seeks to contribute to the clarification of the relationship between Iron Age I Philistine culture and anthropoid coffins. These coffins are presented here in

the discussion of Philistine burials for two reasons. First of all, they are included because of their long-time association with this ancient culture, and second, because of the material evidence that appears to link them together. Significant aspects in the history of Philistine/anthropoid coffin study, germane to the purpose of the chapter, will be recalled. A chronological chart of anthropoid coffins will be drawn to help clarify the issues involved. Establishing the proper chronology is an essential step in the process toward a clearer understanding of these coffins and their relationship to the Philistines. This will especially be seen through the evidence related to the coffins found at Deir el-Balah. This chart will also include identifiable Philistine pottery found in context with these coffins.

It will be argued that there is ample evidence to include these coffins in the discussion of Philistine burials at this stage. Philistine pottery in the burials has given an indication of Philistine influence. It may be observed on the chart provided that the amounts of this pottery are small in these contexts. These meager amounts may certainly minimize the evident influence, but at least some influence is measurable. As a part of the justification for this chapter, the discussion will pursue data which allows for the inclusion of the coffins in the dialogue of the Philistine burial material repertoire. Evidence will be presented, comparable to that which has been used to support a connection to the Egyptian culture. Available evidence against linking this custom to the Philistines will also be presented in order to provide a balanced view of this controversial subject.

The construction of these coffins will be briefly outlined for a better understanding of the subject. Construction materials from which Egyptian counterparts

were made will be mentioned as a parallel and contrast. The locations that can be connected to Philistine culture will be cited in their various contexts. The variations in construction methods and materials between Egyptian coffins and those from Philistine associated contexts will highlight the reason some scholars are cautious about linking these coffins to this particular group of ancient people.

## **6.2 WHY A CHAPTER ON THIS TENUOUS ASPECT?**

*A brief history of the beginnings of the study of these coffins* This chapter is necessary in the study of Philistine burial customs because they have been associated with anthropoid coffins for such a long time. The history of this relationship may well have begun with the earliest excavation of one of the sites to be discussed in this chapter: Beth Shean. Dothan and Dothan (1992:58) indicate this work in the early 1920's was initially led by Dr. Clarence Fisher. It would become significant from the context of Beth Shean that Fisher had previously excavated in Egypt because the material record at Beth Shean proved to be heavily influenced by Egyptian culture.

Another Egyptologist to excavate anthropoid coffins in Israel was Sir Matthew William Flinders Petrie. Petrie's influence in the field of ancient Near Eastern

archaeology was great. One reason he is still remembered today is due to his innovative efforts to employ scientific methodology such as stratigraphy and pottery typology to his excavations.

Petrie identified a strong Egyptian influence at the Tell el-Far'ah tombs in the two seasons of digging during 1928 and 1929. As with Fisher, it is appropriate that Petrie would have done the excavation at Farah, since he too had been working in Egypt for several years previous to his return to Palestine. Initially it is seen that these two early sites from an anthropoid coffin context contained an abundance of Egyptian-oriented material.

As related by Yisraeli (1993:442), Petrie ascribed five tombs to the “lords” or “seranim” of the Philistines as seen in the Old Testament. This designation is likely due to the discovery of Philistine pottery in the tombs. According to Dothan and Dothan (1992:70), Albright was later able to point out a flaw in Petrie’s analysis. Petrie had dated the tombs to a period of time that pre-dated the typical date assigned to the entrance of the Philistines into Canaan. While he agreed with Petrie’s sequence of the tombs, he corrected the earlier dates.

It seems possible that Petrie might have been trying to allow for an earlier wave of Philistines to have appeared. This would have worked quite neatly with his suggestion that the appearance of “Philistines” during the Patriarchal period was more than an anachronistic reference to these Iron Age peoples. Bierling (1992:24) suggests that the early appearance of Philistines in Genesis may be a reference to an earlier wave of raiders. Kitchen (1966:80) and Hindson (1971:94) suggest the term refers to early Aegean immigrants who came to Palestine from Crete.

There seems to be fairly broad agreement in scholarship that there was a twelfth century movement of Philistines into the Levant. The questions begin to arise when discussing the procedures that brought them there. Many state that the Philistines were settled in Canaan by Ramesses III following his defeat of them along the Nile River. The Papyrus Harris, however, states that the Sea Peoples were taken captive to Egypt. Singer (1992:44-46) contends that “Egypt” may have referred to any land possessed by Egypt. Weinstien (1998:191) disagrees that the Philistines were settled by Ramesses. However they were initially settled, Finkelstein (1998:140) emphasizes the standard view of the early Philistines and their powerful presence in the Levant. He states that they began to assert themselves shortly after their arrival there.

The problem with Petrie’s interpretation of the Farah tombs as pointed out by Albright, was that the archaeological data did not support his suggestion. As Dothan and Dothan (1992:70) point out, there was only the pottery of the later 12<sup>th</sup> century Philistines present in this context and not the earlier Mycenaean predecessor. T. Dothan (1982:260) indicates that this Philistine pottery was the dominant feature in the 500 series tombs found there. No characteristic pottery, and only a fragment of a coffin was found in the earlier 900 series tombs, dated by scarabs to the time of Ramesses II.

Dothan and Dothan (1992:69) indicate that Albright corrected this problem in chronology showing that the tombs in this context could not have been in use before the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. Albright was able to draw on his work done at the site of Tell Beit Mirsim to provide supporting evidence for his rebuttal. Thus begins the discussion and disagreement that still surrounds the study of the custom of burial in anthropoid clay coffins and the Philistine culture of Iron I Canaan.

*The perspective of the world of scholarship* The discussion continues to this day with some of the same dialogue taking place. The fact that modern scholarship continues to associate these coffins with the Philistines is alone motivation to include such a discussion in a paper focusing on Philistine burial customs. Davis (1988:193) articulates what has been repeated by a number of scholars in relationship to the Philistines and anthropoid coffins when he states, “the Philistines often utilized clay anthropoid coffins while the Romans later made some coffins of lead.”

Other current publications continue to connect these coffins with the Philistines in spite of the trends in some scholarly circles away from making such a link. In his description of the various inhabitants of Tell el-Farah(S), Mattingly (2000:114) states that the Philistines settled there during Iron Age I, and he not only points to the Philistine pottery to support his statement, but also cites the anthropoid coffins. As it will be brought out in this chapter, the presence of this pottery does provide a link to the Philistine culture, but one must be careful that the argument does not become circular; such as, pottery equals “A,” therefore “A” equals pottery. In this instance it would be, bichrome pottery equals Philistines, therefore Philistines must have lived wherever their pottery is found. This chapter will maintain that the connection between Philistines and anthropoid coffin contexts is not made simply because of pottery.

Another example from contemporary publications, where these coffins are linked to the Philistines, is found in Matthews (1996:12). In his book on customs of the peoples of the Bible, an anthropoid coffin is pictured and referred to as Philistine. Another current source, published by Time-Life Books (Papanek 1993:35), shows a close up, full page of the grotesque anthropoid coffin with the feathered headdress from Beth-Shean.

The caption does not say the coffin was Philistine, but identifies its headgear as being typical of that of the Philistines. Therefore this chapter is included not only because of the long-time connection that has been made, but also because of the influence this association has had on modern thought and the continued connections being made in contemporary scholarship. Beck (1980:75) also points to these coffins as representative of Philistine culture and custom.

One of the voices speaking against a Philistine association with anthropoid coffins is Professor Larry Stager from Harvard University. In addition to publishing numerous articles pertaining to Philistines and their culture, he is also director of the Ashkelon excavation. Stager (1998:160-161) disagrees that any connection can be made between these coffins and the Philistines. He cites clear and specific evidence that associates them to Egyptian culture rather than Philistine. He points to the hieroglyphs on the coffin at Lachish and the chronological problems arising with the Balah coffins to make his case. As stated elsewhere in this chapter, the Balah coffins predate Philistine settlement. Dever (1992:101), Gonen (1984:69), and Weinstein (1992:143) refer to the Egyptian nature of the anthropoid coffins. The hieroglyphs on the Lachish coffin are also unambiguous evidence of this Egyptian connection. In addition to the material and historical evidence, Stager also suggests that Egyptians abroad who could not have had their remains taken back to Egypt, could at least in this way have an Egyptian style burial.

*The evidence in the burials* Another reason this chapter is needed has to do with the evidence itself. As noted, these coffins are of an Egyptian origin; there is no doubt about this fact. In the section on cultural influences, three specific reasons will be given that convincingly link these coffins to the Egyptians. These reasons will be in addition to

those used by Professor Stager above to identify the specific coffin at Lachish with this culture. This cultural link, however, does not preclude a Philistine connection. The crucial point this chapter is attempting to make is that, while these coffins reflect a strong Egyptian influence, they also show signs of Philistine input. The challenge is to measure the nature and level of this input.

There are specific key factors used to identify the anthropoid coffins as Egyptian, such as burial contents and the traceable origin of the custom to Egypt. A similar type of association can also be used to link this practice in some settings to Philistines. Positive connections can be made in at least two distinct ways. It is worth stating that these two points are also two of the decisive factors by which these coffins are linked to Egyptian culture. One of the methods utilized has to do with the material data while the other is more of an interpretative suggestion based on the observation of the archaeological information.

First of all, Philistine culture may be linked to the anthropoid clay coffins, as already mentioned, because of Philistine pottery being found in some contexts with the coffins. Caution should be exercised in order to avoid the mistake of overemphasizing the association between pots and people as Stager (1995:332) has warned. Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau (1996:93) seem to affirm a connection between pottery and cultural background if the ceramic record is “conspicuously different” from the others to which it may be compared. Referring to Lachish, Stager (1998:162) states, “hardly a trace of Philistine bichrome pottery” was found, but an Egyptian style temple was identified there. It cannot be conclusively determined that everywhere Philistine pottery is found that Philistines were the ones who left it.

It should also be noted that bichrome pottery is not found in every Canaanite anthropoid coffin setting. As it has been discussed in other sections of this paper, there is indication of a trade network that spanned not only the areas and cultures around the Mediterranean world, but also extended over the time periods between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. More specifics regarding the pottery and other items found in the coffin contexts may be found in the section of this chapter on burial contents, and to avoid redundancy will not be repeated here.

T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:93) has made a noteworthy comparison that links anthropoid coffins to Philistine culture. These coffins and their Philistine affinities will be outlined below. She has presented information in a more recent article in which she imparts a good bit of the archaeological data pertaining to the coffins from Deir el-Balah, and no definite connection to the Philistines is made. Of all the sites presented here, Balah is the earliest chronologically. It is in fact, as already stated, too early to have been Philistine. Even where the pottery has been found the evidence is often too scanty to make a connection. Perhaps an early Philistine necropolis will be found at one of the sites currently being excavated and many of these questions will be quickly answered. At this time, the image portrayed must be limited to the available information.

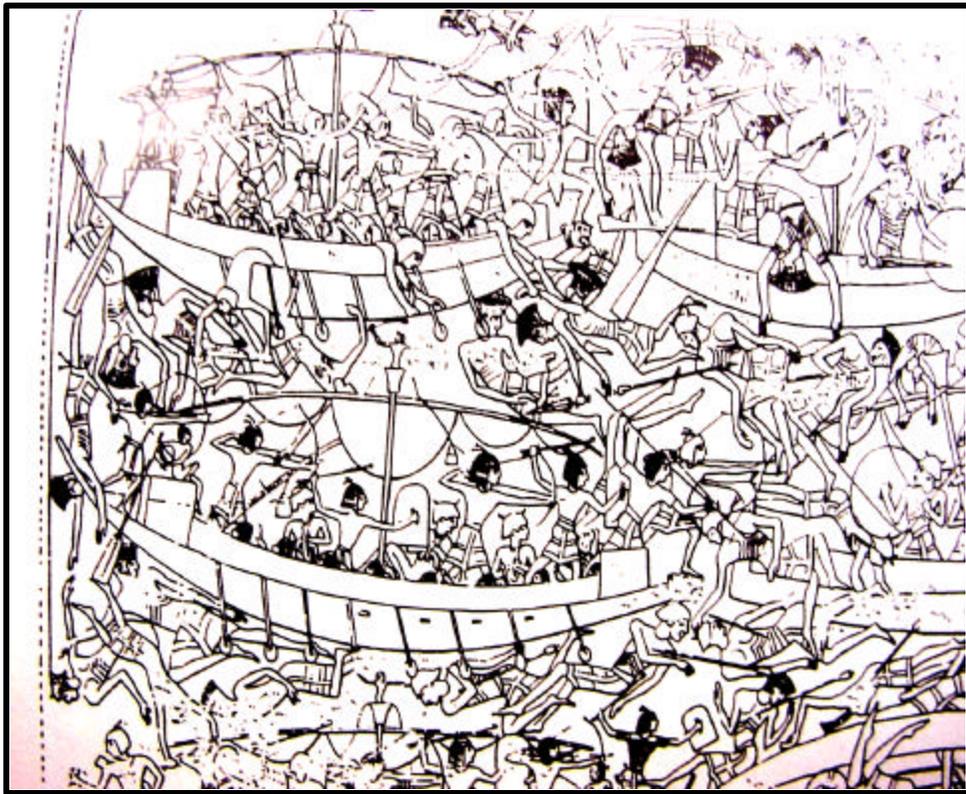
In addition to the evidence from the anthropoid coffin contexts themselves, there is also material evidence from other locations that provide sufficient motivation for studying these coffins from a Philistine frame of reference. For instance, there is Egyptian pottery and other material in sites where there are no anthropoid coffins. Many of the burials in these locations contained Philistine pottery in addition to the Egyptian. This mixture of pottery types is found in a variety of grave types as well.

Among the jar burials at Azor, for example, a scarab from the 19th-20<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt was found. These Azor burials have been submitted for consideration in this paper due to the significant amount of Philistine pottery found in them. Bloch-Smith (1992:160) has reported that among these burials there was a “preponderance” of bowls and craters. Some of those identified were of the characteristic Philistine type. In cist grave D30, also at Azor, there was an abundant presence of Egyptian influence, in addition to a Philistine bowl found there. These two examples are a reminder of the level of cultural interchange that was taking place throughout the area at this time in history, and they are also a reminder that it is difficult to separate the evidence in these sites into neat cultural/ethnic packages.

In some ways it would be like attempting to sort out the various linguistic influences bearing upon the English language and then searching for an American who still speaks an English language without the presence of these influences. So it is at times challenging to identify what these ancient cultures may have been, even though specific ethnic characteristics can be readily observed.

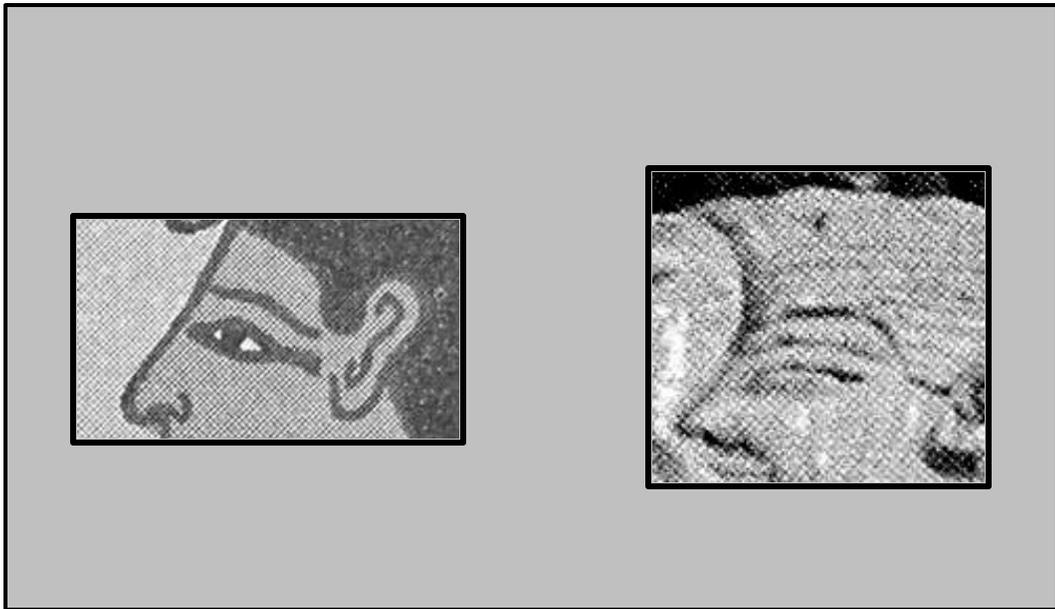
It is significant for this study to acknowledge the intense Egyptian influence on these burials that have reflected a Philistine presence or impact. A perusal of the depictions of the warriors on the temple walls at Medinet Habu is quite informative. Pharaoh Ramesses III's artisans show the Egyptian warriors as well as the enemies they fought, including those he identified as the “Prst” or Philistines. The twelfth century depiction may provide somewhat of a snapshot of the various personalities involved in the struggle illustrated. Curiously there are similarities in dress and other aspects of appearance between the groups. It can be observed from the Medinet Habu reliefs that

the persons involved in the battles wore knee length kilts, with some of them appearing very much like those worn by the Egyptian sailors. Dothan and Dothan (1992:17) make the observation that the boats and rigging are similar between the groups. O'Connor (2000:85-102) analyzes the Medinet Habu inscriptions and determines that the Sea Peoples were a well organized group of invaders with a type of warlord leading the attack.



**Plate 10.** Sketch of Medinet Habu reliefs. Dothan & Dothan (1992:17) Notice the comparable dress worn by the Egyptians on the left and the Sea Peoples on the right.

It seems noteworthy to observe that the eyes of the warriors are comparable from one group to the other. The fairly typical Egyptian eye preparation, familiar from currently published representations, appears to have been a shared custom with other people groups throughout the area, including the Philistines. In these funerary wall depictions, the Prst are being led away and a close-up look at the eyes seems to reveal a comparable preparation. It may be understood that the eye preparation was either aesthetic, or practical due to the bright Egyptian sun. It seems that a blackening of the areas around the eyes would have dulled the sun's reflection and perhaps prevented eye pain or damage.



**Figure 1.** *Egyptian deity Ptah.* Budge (1969:498)

**Figure 2.** *Philistine captive as depicted at Medinet Habu.* Dothan (1992:plate 2)

**Plate 11.** *Photographic comparison of eyes*

Another viable interpretation would be that the depictions of the Philistines on the reliefs were the result of the expression of the Egyptian artists who would have portrayed eyes in the same stylistic fashion regardless of the individual's cultural background. If a link can be made in this fashion, it would indicate that such similarities between the two cultures, when they can be made, were the result of contact between the two people groups over a long and productive trade relationship. It is logical to assume that other facets of cultural custom and practice, not as observable as pottery and wall reliefs, would also have been exchanged.

An examination of these coffins within a Philistine context seems warranted, at least in part, due to the fact that other sites show a similar Philistine and Egyptian confluence. As noted elsewhere in this paper, the cultural influence of the Egyptians will be visible not just in the use of anthropoid coffins, but also in the adopting of certain styles in the manufacture of pottery, like the wider necked pour spouts on Egyptian vessels. More information on the Egyptian impression left on the communities related to the burials under consideration will be detailed in the section on cultural influences.

**CHART OF SELECTED SITES WITH ANTHROPOID  
CLAY COFFINS AND ASSOCIATED INFORMATION**

<b>Sites</b>	<b>Deir el-Balah</b>	<b>Beth Shean</b>	<b>Tell el-Farah</b>	<b>Lachish</b>
<b>Approximate date of coffin context presented</b>	<i>13<sup>th</sup> century</i>	<i>Late 11<sup>th</sup> Century—date for the presence of the Philistine pottery</i>	<i>12<sup>th</sup> century</i>	<i>12<sup>th</sup> century</i>
<b>Philistine pottery in burials</b>	<i>None—Some Mycenaean and Cypriot</i>	<i>Scanty—e.g. Late Philistine strainer-spout jug dating to the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 10<sup>th</sup> century</i>	<i>From tombs 552 and 562—T. Dothan's 4 traditions: Canaanite, Egyptianized Philistine, Canaanite/Egyptian &amp; imitation Egyptian</i>	<i>None--Mixture of influences—site dated by the Philistine pottery present</i>
<b>Coffin styles</b>	<i>Mostly grotesque-naturalistic in Tomb 114</i>	<i>Mostly naturalistic with a few grotesque—feathered headdresses—a key link to the Philistines</i>	<i>Grotesque</i>	<i>Grotesque</i>
<b>Tomb types</b>	<i>Cut in the marl from the surface of the ground</i>	<i>Rock-cut chambers used for communal burials</i>	<i>Rock-cut chambers used for communal burials</i>	<i>Cave tomb 570—embellished with plastered floor and walls, contained both coffins</i>

**Plate 12.** *Anthropoid Clay Coffin Chart.*  
Constructed by Fugitt. Sources used:  
Dothan & Dothan 1992; Dothan 1982; and  
Bloch-Smith 1992.

### **6.3 HISTORY OF THE COFFINS**

In a relatively recent article on the subject of the anthropoid coffins found during her excavation at Deir el-Balah, T. Dothan (1998:26) briefly outlines the history of this custom. She states that it began in Egypt sometime between 2000 and 1785 BC, and increased in use through New Kingdom Egypt (1570-1085 BC). She indicates they may have been brought to Canaan by Egyptian mercenaries, of which some of the Sea Peoples may have been a part, during the period of transition between Late Bronze and early Iron Ages. Singer (1985:109) indicates that the presence of Egyptian military outposts throughout Canaan may have been due to the Sea Peoples' attack on Egypt, such as those depicted on the temple walls at Medinet Habu. He suggests that these garrisons may have been posted to prevent such an attack from occurring again. Another possibility suggested by Singer is that this may be evidence of Pharaoh's attempt to maintain control over the area. Whatever the cause of the establishment of these Egyptian centers, their presence is indisputable.

Dothan does not state that it was the Philistine settlers who brought the use of these coffins into Canaan. As mentioned, the coffins predate the accepted date for the

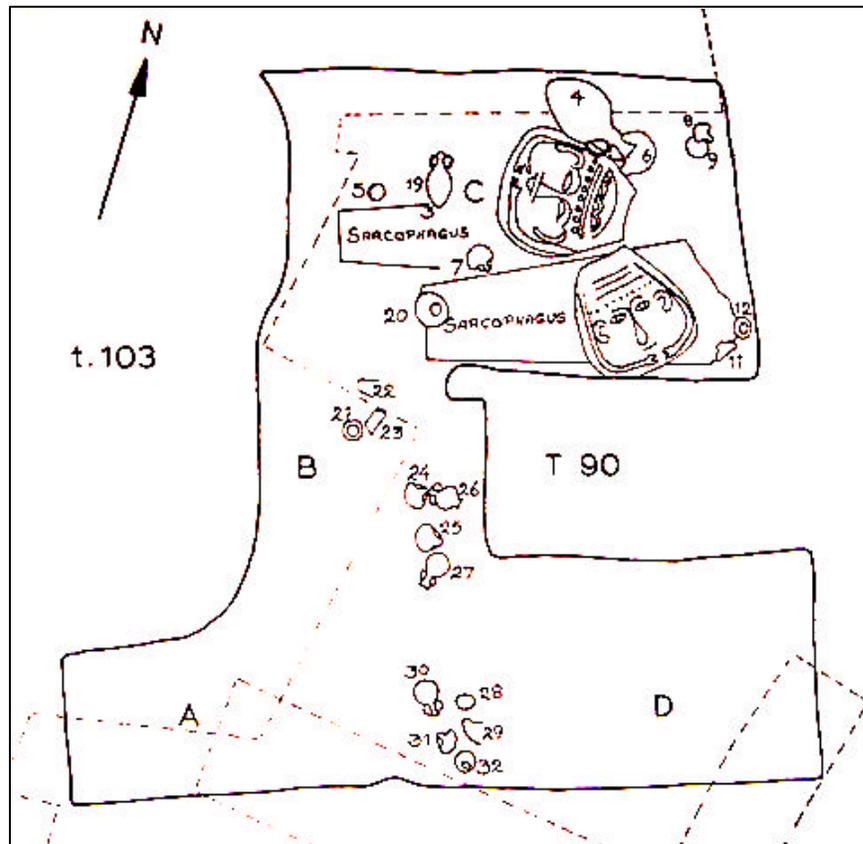
major influx of Philistine presence into Canaan in 1175. What is apparent by a consideration of the evidence is that whoever introduced the custom into Canaan was under the influence of this deep-seated Egyptian practice and their accompanying material culture.

It is perceptible by the presence of these coffins in the excavated sites that the custom of using anthropoid coffins during the Late Bronze and into the Iron Age was a fairly well-known practice. Dothan (1998:27) states that before her excavation at Deir el-Balah, she was able to track down almost fifty anthropoid coffins that had found their way into museums and private collections.

Beginning in 1972, Dothan and her teams excavated the site for a decade with a total of fifteen excavation seasons. The early versions of the coffins found were traced to the Late Bronze Age period. Dothan (1998:33) relates that Neutron Activation Analysis revealed the coffins were also made locally. In fact, she logically states that they would have to be made locally. Because of the difficulty in firing them adequately, they were extremely breakable and would not have traveled very well to any distant location.

Adequate firing was complicated due to the size of the coffins. Kilns were designed to accommodate pottery, not coffins of over 3 meters in length. They would therefore have to be fired in a different fashion, and with a much lower heat than the typical kiln type of firing. Their brittleness may account partly for why so many of the coffins that have been found were in fragments. Being easily broken, any kind of disturbance throughout the centuries could have destroyed them, as in Beth Shean, where it is likely that grave robbers wreaked havoc some time in the centuries following the last use of the cemetery (Dothan and Dothan 1992:59). Mazar (1993:218) states in burial

caves contemporary with Strata VII and VI there were over fifty fragments of anthropoid coffins. The fragmentary nature of these coffins affirms the observation made above.



**Plate 13.** Tomb from Northern cemetery at Beth Shean, Anthropoid coffins with Philistine type warrior headdress in situ, Source Oren (1973:161)

#### **6.4 ANTHROPOID CLAY COFFIN CONSTRUCTION**

As already established, the anthropoid coffins discussed here are those made of clay. Similarly shaped coffins constructed of wood or cartonage have also been found in burials. Due to the lack of trees, burial in the wooden versions would have been a sign of higher social standing in Egypt. Bloch-Smith (1992:166) records that two wood coffins were found in Sahab, in the trans-Jordan, but she adds that these were the only two Iron Age wooden coffins found within her Judahite context. These coffins have no direct connection to the Philistines.

According to the Dothans' (Dothan and Dothan 1992:39) analysis, the clay coffins were constructed by the coil method. She states that this can be observed from the inside of the coffins. They are roughly formed in "human shape," thus their name. The "foot" end would actually have been the bottom during construction. Once dried, and put to use, they would have been laid on their backs for burial. A separate clay cover was made for the lid. The lids bore a representation of the individual or one of the individuals buried in the coffins. These artistic representations have appeared in two types, showing varying degrees of skill, with some being more highly stylized. The two coffin styles have come to be known as "naturalistic" and "grotesque." The different types will be outlined in greater detail below.

These coffins were in some ways a work of art and show a depth of thought and expression. This is especially revealing given the fact they are dealing with the issue of death in their construction. The opening over which the cover or lid bearing the face was placed also served as an aperture through which the body could be inserted. The lids or faces were fired at a higher temperature than the rest of the coffin, making them more durable than the bulk of the coffin. Though the varying levels of skill may be observed in the different coffins under consideration, this basic method of construction was likely employed in the manufacturing process.

Holes were left along the back of the coffins during construction, apparently while the clay was still soft. T. Dothan (1992:254) suggests that the series of small holes served a practical purpose and were likely left in the coffins to allow the fluids from the decaying remains to drain. Most interesting, however, is what she describes as the “Seelenloch.” This larger, round hole near the head of the coffin is conjectured as having been an escape hatch for the soul of the individual or individuals buried inside.

The presence of the opening and this interpretation could possibly lend significant strength to the suggestion and discussion, found in an earlier chapter, on how a distinction may be made between the flesh and the bones of the deceased in the ancient mindset. It has been suggested that as long as the flesh was still on the bones the individual was still involved in traveling to their final destination in the afterlife. Once the flesh had completely decomposed from the skeleton this journey was seen as complete. Therefore, this aperture in the anthropoid coffins suits the discussion well, in that the soul or life spirit of the deceased could be allowed to leave when the appropriate time came.

## **6.5 TYPES OF COFFINS**

As stated, there have been two types of anthropoid clay coffins associated with the Philistines. They have been identified as “naturalistic” and “grotesque.” T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:93) affirms that Beth Shean’s coffins exemplify the two types. Since the history of these coffins has already been expounded upon, this section of the paper will focus on a description of the two styles.

The naturalistic variety, as its name implies, appears to have attempted a more natural representation of the individual buried inside. These coffins typically make more of a distinction between the head, neck, and body of the structure than do those of the grotesque style. The facial features of the naturalistic coffins tend to have a more human-like appearance and tend to be molded into the clay of the lid itself. The features on these coffins are in their normal positions on the face, spaced and proportioned in a natural way.

It is enlightening to ponder the naturalistic style face of these coffins and attempt to imagine the individuals buried in them. The unique facial features of each of these coffins enable one to see the ancient people through a kind of artistic snapshot in clay. In

contrast to the grotesque style, the naturalistic style of these coffins provides more of a picture to these individuals from the past.

The grotesque style of coffins is similar in the method of construction, but is easily distinguishable from the naturalistic type lids. The grotesque features are more stylized and less human-like in appearance. They appear as caricatures in some respects as can be observed by even a casual appraisal. These features are applied separately to the lid as opposed to the molded method of the naturalistic style. It may be noted that the grotesque style coffin is more closely associated with the Philistine culture. The primary correlation is the headdress worn by the stylized individuals on the coffin lids and their similarities with the Philistine warriors depicted on the walls of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (Dothan and Dothan 1992:15).

Both types of anthropoid coffins have a separately formed lid bearing a type of personal image apparently depicting the individual interred inside. It may be assumed that when the remains of more than one individual are included in the coffin, such as those dubbed 'Romeo and Juliet' at Deir el-Balah (T. Dothan 1998:30), the representation is of the dominant, perhaps older individual, or the male. It may also be possible that the image portrayed on the outside of the coffin is more of an idealized representation of who the person may have been.

## **6.6 LEVANTINE SITES**

It is important to emphasize in placing these coffins in their geographical context, that no anthropoid clay coffins have been found at any of the sites identified as the five major cities associated with initial Philistine settlement. T. Dothan (1982:253) has mapped the sites where they have been found. By far the bulk of this type of coffin was found in Egypt, but the number of Canaanite locations is significant. They are: Tell el-Farah, Deir el-Balah, Lachish, and Beth Shean. In addition to these locations, Dothan identified the trans-Jordanian sites of Dibon, Sahab, and Amman on her map. Plate 5 in chapter three of this paper is a map which shows the sites to be dealt with in this paper.

Bloch-Smith (1992:166) also cites Tel Midrass as an Iron Age I location where a fragment of a coffin lid was found. Tel Midrass is located approximately six kilometers east of Beth Shean. She states that the fragment was found on the surface of the Tell. The piece found was of a naturalistic style, the type of which was common at Beth Shean. Without finding more evidence of burials containing anthropoid coffins, the scanty find mentioned here does not contribute significantly to the discussion at hand.

For the purpose of this study, the four Canaanite sites will be highlighted. Of these four, perhaps Deir el-Balah is the most questionable due to the early date placed on

the appearance of the coffins there. These coffins are the earliest to appear in the Canaanite setting, dating generally to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. For obvious reasons, this problem in chronology prohibits this particular community from being closely tied to the early Philistines, since it is generally accepted that they did not begin to settle in Canaan until somewhere around 1175. The coffins from Balah are important to mention because of the similar cultural connections evident in the context there. As mentioned already, Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery ware was discovered there, allowing for a common 'Aegean to Canaan' association with the later Philistines.

The other three sites mentioned are associated with Philistine culture because of the presence of Philistine pottery or some other Philistine related cultural connection in the burial contexts there. Beth Shean, for example, is included not because of the presence of Philistine pottery, but due to the parallels in headdresses. Of the fifty coffins found at Beth Shean's Northern Cemetery, Bloch-Smith (1992:164) relates that most of them were of the naturalistic style.

Among those of the naturalistic style there were also grotesque coffins found in the burials. In fact it is from these grotesque anthropoid coffins that Dothan (1982:274) has drawn attention to the parallels in the headdresses between the coffins and the wall relief depictions already mentioned. From researching the results of Bloch-Smith (1992:164) at this site, the finds can be specified in the following way. There were two tombs at Beth Shean that contained coffins with this particular headdress or a variation of the same. Because of the details to be presented below, these tombs, numbered 66 and 90, comprised the more Philistine-like connections found among anthropoid clay coffins.

Of the two tombs, there were a total of five coffins of the grotesque type. Bloch-Smith states that three were helmeted or wearing caps, one donned a vertical fluting on its headdress, and the other one wore the zigzag line. Representations of these various headdresses are pictured below. The similarities with the “feathered” headdress of the “Prst,” as identified by T. Dothan, may be easily observed. Dothan (1982:274) states that there is no parallel for this unique headgear on any anthropoid coffin in Canaan or in Egypt. This point would appear to distance these coffins from the otherwise Egyptian background of most anthropoid coffins. This association, derived by combining the similarities of these headdresses to the wall reliefs, lends support to the Sea Peoples/Philistine influence on these tombs.

Brug (1985:151) sounds a word of caution, however, regarding making this connection. He states that parallels to feathered headgear has been identified from other cultures. He cites similarities from the Egyptian, Hittite, Canaanite, and Cypriot cultures. His caution should be well considered and certainly isolated evidence should not be used to make far reaching generalizations. On the other hand, the correlation between this bit of evidence and this ancient culture should not be minimized. It must also be remembered that the connection being made at this point is not simply headdress to headdress. There are other variables involved in the process of making such a link. Initially, there are the observable details of the headgear. It can be observed on the illustrations provided below that the amount of detail that is paralleled between the two warriors seems more than coincidental. Another affirmation is Ramesses III’s identification (the “Prst”) of these warriors and the subsequent linguistic connection

made to the Philistines. In addition to these parallels, another type of headdress related to the feathered ones pictured by Ramesses III, should be identified.

Observations of the wall reliefs at Medinet Habu have shown the Philistines with these feathered style headdresses. Also pictured are warriors wearing different variations of the feathered style headgear. Some of them are decorated with beads and continuous “z” shaped line patterns Bloch-Smith (1992:164) has called the “zigzag.” In fact, both “zigzag” and a shape she identified as “fluted” can be seen in these Egyptian depictions. Dothan and Dothan (1992: plate 2), T. Dothan (1982:275), and Wachsmann (2000:110-111) have pictured some of these snapshots from the mortuary walls. It appears, from the representations of the sea battle, that both types mentioned above are visibly worn by the Sea Peoples, apparently the Prst.

The term “Prst” was found on the Papyrus Harris. This Egyptian document dates to the time of Ramesses III (1182-1151), and identifies one of the groups of foreigners who came from the north to attack Egypt. From a linguistic perspective, Champollion was able to make the link from the Prst to the Philistines. Important at this point is the fact that there are similarities between the different people groups shown on the reliefs. In addition to the images of the battle scenes, the depictions of the captured peoples also reveal the same combination of headdresses, comparable to those on the coffins at Beth Shean.



**Figure 1.** Anthropoid clay coffin lid from Beth Shean  
Example of the helmeted type headdress. Picture taken  
By S. Fugitt. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania  
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



**Figure 2.** Grotesque coffin lid from Beth Shean Tomb  
66, wearing the feathered headdress. T Dothan 1982:272



**Figure 3.** Anthropoid coffin lid in the grotesque style from Beth Shean Tomb 90, zigzag headdress. Dothan 1982:272

**Figure 4.** *Naturalistic coffin lid.* Notice the distinctly “molded” features as opposed to the “appliqué” of the grotesque. Photo by Fugitt, courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

**Plate 14.** *Photographic comparison of Anthropoid Coffin lids*

The similarities between the representations of the peoples depicted here are quite noticeable and warrant more than just a glance. It appears that such a parallel allows for some level of connection to be made between the Philistines and the individuals buried in the coffins at Beth Shean. Mazar (1993:218) has suggested that Egyptian officials or soldiers serving in the area may have been those buried here. This suggestion is made based upon the Egyptian context, but the link to the Philistines may still be seen in the coffins themselves. This connection may be made in this particular context without the benefit of the presence of Philistine pottery. Other sites to be considered in this section of the paper will have the advantage of the material evidence having been present in the burials.

The next site to be considered will be Tell el-Farah. This site has already been discussed concerning its significance to the study of the history of anthropoid clay coffin research. This section will cite specific evidence that will give concrete substantiation to the discussion of these burials in the context of Philistine culture. The importance of this site in the study of Philistine burials is due to the overwhelming presence of characteristic Philistine pottery. These burials may also be linked to the Philistine culture by their tomb

type as well, which will be discussed in a section of this chapter devoted to that subject. The issue of the rock-cut rectangular or trapezoidal shaped chambers was dealt with however in the chapter on tomb types.

Bloch-Smith (1992:166) identifies the three bench tombs, cited as numbers 935, 552, and 563, which contained fragments of anthropoid clay coffins. Given the discussion on rock-cut, chamber, and bench tombs earlier in this paper, it may contribute to the dialogue at this point that it was in such a context that these coffin fragments were found. T. Dothan (1982:32) emphasizes the impact that Egyptian culture had upon this particular context. Bloch-Smith (1992:166) cites the scarcity of Philistine pottery as well as the evidence of Egyptian culture as being the precipitating cause of the Egyptian identity of these burials.

It is possible to trace some interesting specifics that affirm the more Egyptian nature of these coffins. They are modeled in the grotesque style, which at Beth Shean was the more Philistine of the two types, but there is an additional element found at Farah not observed on the coffins explored at Beth Shean. The Farah coffins show a distinctive sub-quality of craftsmanship and also include the Osiris beard, found at the other sites except those described at Beth Shean. Contributing to the Egyptian flavor of these coffin fragments, there were also scarabs and Egyptian pottery.

The last site to be considered in relationship to these coffins and the Philistines is Lachish. Curiously, at Lachish, the discovery of the presence of anthropoid clay coffin remains was from a cave tomb. Bloch-Smith (1992:166) relates that this burial was labeled as Cave 570, and had been embellished with plastered floor and walls. The only possible connection to the Philistines in this burial setting is that Philistine pottery from

the site was used to date this context to the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. Once again, however, as has been the case in the other sites, the Egyptian impact upon the communities using this tomb is overwhelming. The lack of Philistine pottery in the burial raises questions as to the degree of Philistine influence upon this community, in fact, Brug (1985:150) denies there is a Philistine connection at all to these burials. The site of Lachish itself, with the burial of Cave 570 included, is another example of the cultural amalgamation apparent throughout the ancient Levant.

Bloch-Smith (1992:166) reports that depictions of Isis and Nephthys, two Egyptian deities, were found in this burial. In addition to these representations, multiple scarabs and two Uzat eyes were found. One other discovery made here, not found in the other Levantine anthropoid coffin contexts, was the presence of a hieroglyphic inscription painted on one of the two coffins. In Egyptian style, the inscription appears along what might be the front of the coffin, or on top from the horizontal position *in situ*. The amount of scanty evidence here makes it difficult once again to ascribe any definite Philistine affinities to this site.

## **6.7 BURIAL SETTINGS: TYPES OF TOMBS**

This brief section is included in order to highlight the variety of the tomb types among the anthropoid coffins discussed in this paper. By far the most unique is the cave tomb of Lachish, labeled Cave 570. With plastered floor and walls, this embellished cave tomb stands out among the other settings. This plastering seems to be reminiscent of other architectural structures found within Philistine contexts at some of the more widely accepted Philistine sites. An example of this comparison may be seen in what T. Dothan (Dothan and Dothan 1992:225) has identified as a temple at Tell Qasile. Part of the features of the temple included plastered benches and a plastered brick platform.

The well-known tombs from Tell el-Farah were cut in rock, and were thought by Petrie to have been significant enough to be called the tombs of the five Philistine lords. The Farah tombs may also provide a link to Philistine culture. As was discussed in the chapter on burials and tombs, the possible Mycenaean origin of these rectangular rock-hewn tombs with the stepped dromoi, may connect the burials with that shared Aegean milieu. Similarly, it appears that the tombs at Beth Shean were carved in the rock, as early as the Early Bronze IV period. Yisraeli (1993:441) indicates that Far'ah was continuously occupied from the MBA IIB to the Roman period. Bloch-Smith (1992:164) points out that typically tombs were reused over the centuries by successive generations and communities.

The tombs excavated by T. Dothan at Deir el-Balah were carved in the marl or firm earth at the surface of the ground. The vaults were more or less of a rectangular shape and, as Dothan (1982:254) describes, were approximately 3.25 meters long, 1.70 meters wide, and 1.70 meters deep. These small chambers were cut somewhat in the

shape of the coffins themselves, large enough to accommodate the coffins and the necessary accompaniments for the burial. These different varieties in tomb types in the settings of the anthropoid coffins focused upon here highlight the symbiotic model once again. Though the underlying dominant influence present in these contexts is Egyptian, it is again apparent that the ancient peoples were unsettled in their cultural cohesion, which supports the nearly cosmopolitan image being portrayed in the model presented in this paper.

## **6.8 BURIAL CONTENTS**

The contents of the burials may be divided into two categories. They will either be a part of the human remains, or of the non-human contents such as ceramics and metals. Other associated aspects, such as body treatments, pertaining to anthropoid coffins, will be considered in this section. The purpose will be to provide a visual image of how these contexts may correspond to others under investigation. The symbiotic model will be implicated again as evidence of the cultural blending. The phenomenon of symbiosis is visible through the similar grave contents and possible practices associated with the burials and tombs.

Because of the overwhelming evidence of Egyptian influence on this burial custom it is necessary to draw attention to both facets of the burial contents in light of that influence. As far as the human remains are concerned, the Philistine evidence seems to reveal no signs of embalming, while this practice apparently became quite wide spread in Egyptian culture. Lesko (2000:1763) states this practice was incorporated into the

funerary rites of those Egyptians who could afford to have it done. Perhaps Canaan dwellers lacked the supplies or the resources to pursue the practice of embalming.

So far as an analysis of particular human remains in the anthropoid coffin contexts is concerned, the few undisturbed remains allow only limited interpretations. From the meager evidence it appears the methods of burial may seem comparable to those in other types of burials throughout the entire Philistine context. It was observed in the chapter on burials and tombs that some burials were individual while others were communal. Some burials were single while others were multiple. Similar patterns appear to emerge through a study of the anthropoid coffins. Bloch-Smith (1992:165) states that Tomb 116 at Deir el-Balah contained skeletal remains of at least three different individuals. T. Dothan (1998:31) also referred to the couple found buried together at Balah as Romeo and Juliet. For the most part the coffin remains in the contexts submitted for exploration here appear to have been scattered some time in antiquity. Scattered bones among the potsherds from shattered coffins make it impossible for further determinations of this sort.

T. Dothan (1982:264ff) has provided a picture catalogue of the tomb assemblages throughout the contexts under consideration here. Tell el-Farah, because of the abundance of Philistine pottery in context, provides insight into the influence Philistine culture had on this community. Dothan (1982:263) categorizes the pottery from tombs 552 and 562 into four groupings. In summary they are: Local Canaanite, Egyptianized Philistine, “reciprocal” Canaanite-Egyptian, and a group of Egyptian imitations made locally.

The anthropoid coffin context of Beth Shean, as indicated earlier, has provided such scanty Philistine material remains that the weight of the evidence which is remotely able to link the burials to Philistines has been drawn from the features on the coffins themselves. Dothan (1982:274) does identify a Philistine strainer-spout jug from the later phase of Philistine pottery, dating to the late 11<sup>th</sup> century or around 1000 BC. According to Dothan (1982:276) even if Philistines can be established as having residents buried at Beth Shean, it appears it would have been from this later phase of Iron Age I. She indicates that the practice of anthropoid coffin burials in this location predates the initial phase of Philistine settlement in Canaan. Dothan (1982:276) states that Tomb 570 at Lachish may correspond to a twelfth century occupation level. She identifies a mixture of pottery styles to make this connection.

## **6.9 CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

It is impossible to discuss the anthropoid coffins of the sites associated with Philistine material culture without acknowledging the overwhelming Egyptian influence

involved. These burials are born out of the Egyptian culture and continued to ply a measure of influence for quite some time on the burial customs in Egypt and sites in Canaan to be considered here and beyond. From the anthropoid coffins in Canaan this Egyptian influence is evident in many areas of the archaeological data. The noticeable impact of this culture on the burials submitted for analysis in this paper has been reiterated throughout the course of this presentation.

Dothan (1982:254) indicates the varieties of cultural influences present in the burials from her work at Deir el-Balah. From the Late Bronze Age setting she was able to identify Mycenaean, Cypriot, and local Canaanite influences in addition to the expected Egyptian presence. Even at this early stage of the appearance of anthropoid coffins in Canaan, it is clear that these peoples were not a single monolithic culture. Noteworthy for the course of this study is the amount of shared cultural expression with the early Philistines. As discussed early in this paper, the Philistine culture, in its initial phase in Canaan, has reflected artistic and pottery parallels with the Mycenaean and Cypriot cultures of the Aegean. These shared cultural expressions now find their way into these representations of Iron Age I Canaanite burials.

Differences and distinctions can also be highlighted between the Philistine and Egyptian influences evident in the burials. Cooley (1968:110) observed an absence of paintings and reliefs in Canaanite tombs and cited their absence as evidence of different views of the afterlife between Egyptian and Canaanite cultures. A similar observation may be made in the consideration of Philistine tombs. At this point an emphasis may be placed on the absence of the characteristically Egyptian practice as evidence of the lack

of true Egyptian presence in the tombs. Though they may have borrowed some Egyptian elements, perhaps they didn't think about afterlife in typical Egyptian fashion.

Stiebing (1970:143) cites Tell el-Far'ah (S) as an example of the Philistines' ability to adapt to new surroundings and to adopt cultural expressions of those around them. He states they seem to have adopted tomb types evident at Far'ah. This is not surprising since, as Stiebing observes, they seem to have borrowed the Semitic deity Dagan (1 Samuel 5:2). It would seem logical then that they would also have implemented burial practices, such as the Egyptian anthropoid coffin, from their neighbors.

## **6.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has sought to clarify the relationship between the Philistines and the custom of anthropoid coffin burials. This well-known and often questioned association has been traced from its beginning through contemporary scholarship. As it is often discovered in archaeological research pertaining to the Old Testament, there are still some areas that remain vague in their definition.

This chapter has highlighted the Egyptian influence on the selected burials presented. It has echoed what has already been emphasized by scholars in the field, that this burial custom was not initiated by the Aegean Philistine settlers. Early such examples were likely the result of Egyptian mercenaries serving under Pharaoh's waning hegemony during the transitional period between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age. With the inclusion of Philistine pottery and the Philistine style headdresses on some

anthropoid coffins, it is feasible to assume that Philistines or Philistine related communities borrowed and adapted this custom as a part of their own burial rites. It has been emphasized throughout, however, that no definite link can be made without some measure of hesitation at this point. Even if the link can be made it is done in a limited fashion with only the few associated coffins.

Four sites have been submitted for consideration here, with primarily three of the four fitting into the correct time-frame of Iron Age I burials. The three locations put forth in this chapter were: Beth Shean, Tell el-Farah, and Lachish. The other location considered was Deir el-Balah. This latter site was included due to the similar Aegean pottery records there, not because of any specific link to the Philistines. Of the three that fit the Iron Age I time frame, Beth Shean and Tell el-Farah make the clearer connections to the Philistines. The limitations of linking all these sites to the Philistines have been outlined in this chapter, but of these three, Lachish is the most unlikely context to have a definite and close association with Philistine culture.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **LITERARY IMPLICATIONS**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will strive to present literary information pertaining to the various burial customs that have been presented throughout the paper. Unfortunately, no significant literary material from the Philistine culture has been found. Consequently there is no literature that can give a complete picture of Philistine burial patterns. This does not mean that Philistines had no system of thought regarding funerary practices and afterlife. It does make the modern researchers job more difficult however. Given this lack of information it is impossible to compare the Philistines with other cultures that

developed elaborate systems of death rituals and provided written instructions as to how they were to be enacted. An example of a more developed system of thought would be the Egyptians and the Egyptian book of the dead. Interestingly, there is the later example of Philistine writing in the royal dedicatory inscription from Ekron, but it is not related to a burial context. It does reflect Greek affinities and cultic request of blessing (Gitin 1998:173-174; 1997:10).

Specific customs have been hinted at in the archaeological records through the burials themselves. These customs will become the focus of this chapter. They will be considered from the literary perspective derived from the Old Testament, with some insights contributed from the Ugaritic texts and other literatures from the ancient Near East. Machinist (2000:53) affirms that the Hebrew Bible gives the most extensive information on the Philistines. His article proceeds then to focus on the Philistines from the biblical perspective.

It should be understood from the beginning of this segment that the Old Testament is very clearly an outgrowth of Israel's relationship with Yahweh, and is not a Philistine body of literature. The Samson narrative, as Ackerman (2000:33) suggests, does present the "bumbling" hero in such a way that it is almost as if it were authored by Philistines. The Philistines are predominately seen as enemies of Israel, however, and even the foolish or "frivolous" (Hester 1956:155) Samson is able to destroy more than one man's share of them.

As it has been discussed in an earlier chapter of this paper, the Philistines play the part of the "other" in the Israelite setting of the Scripture. It may be recalled that Macalister (1965:122) referred to graves found in his early excavations at Gezer as either

Philistine or some “other foreign tribe” because they were so different from “native Palestinian graves.” The Old Testament focuses on Yahweh and Israel’s devotion or lack of devotion to Yahweh. It can be seen in one sense as a sustained polemic against everything that is not Yahwistic. Among other reasons for the animosity, Anderson (1986:201) implies economics played a role. By the time of the later confederacy Philistines controlled the travel routes, which gave them superiority over the area. Mercantile pursuits have also been identified by some as the motivation initial Philistine settlements in Canaan, challenging the traditional view of a Philistine invasion. Barako (2000:513-530) presents a case against the “mercantile phenomenon” in favor of the more traditional view.

Gitin (1998:163) identifies 423 biblical references to the Philistines in the Old Testament and he specifies 76% of these references pertain to the Iron Age I settlers. This paper has attempted to sustain its focus upon these Iron I Philistines. The burial contexts that have been considered were those from this period. There are burials from later periods that reflect at least some Philistine influence, such as Tell el-Ajjul. Bloch-Smith (1992:179) reports a Philistine bowl in a burial context there. Tufnell (1993:52) confirms the presence of Philistine-influenced pottery, but emphasizes that the historical context of Palace V and related graves may date to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Kempinski (1993:53) raises some concerns about the connection of the bichrome pottery and Ajjul. The discussion quickly moves beyond the focus of this study and the associations are not solid enough to place the tombs in question under substantial Philistine influence.

The point is made here to emphasize that people and cultures change with time, and it should be understood that any glimpse gained, especially from the literary sources,

is from a particular context, period, and perspective. With these sources comes a completely different set of criteria and expectation that does not accompany the material data. The historical setting of events portrayed, the political atmosphere of a particular period, and the chronology of the actual historiography all play a part in a proper interpretation of the material at hand. The literary references, specifically the Old Testament, are written in a later period of history, but reflect an historical memory of these Iron Age I communities. This is a limitation that should be understood as the paper begins to focus on these sources and the insights about the Philistines regarding death and associated topics.

## **7.2 DEITIES AND DEATH**

It appears, from the literary perspective that, once the Philistines settled in Canaan, they began to worship Canaanite deities. T. Dothan (1982:20) states that eventually Dagon became the head of the Philistine pantheon. She draws on the biblical texts to support this theory. The Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles 10:10, which is in the context of the death of Saul, states that Saul's armor was taken to the "temple of their

gods,” but his head was taken to the “temple of Dagon.” This passage will be cited again in the section on body treatments, and is referenced at this point for the purpose of emphasizing the cultic connection of the Philistines to Dagon, a very specific Canaanite deity.

This deity’s name has been a matter of debate and scholarly discussion. The name has been identified as Dagon and it has been found as Dagan. Freeman (1967:194) provides a concise discussion of the name “Dagon/Dagan.” The association is between “Dagon” and “fish” in one, and “Dagan” and “grain” in the other. He cites a palace in Babylon where this deity was depicted as half fish to support that particular interpretation. He then alludes to the passage in 1 Samuel 6 which supports the view that the deity would have been more associated with grain. Myers (1965:81) states very simply he was a “vegetation deity.” The Philistine cities were located in an agricultural area.

The passage in 1 Samuel 6 pertains to the returning of the ark of Yahweh after it had been taken while in battle against Israel. Priests associated with the Philistines decided to send a guilt offering of gold “mice” and “tumors” with the ark on its journey home. Mice and the “cult of the Mouse” have been connected to Aegean-type cultures, of which the Philistines were a part (Ahlström 1984:121). This rodent infestation could only have been possible if there was plenty of grain for them to be able to multiply. In fact Stinespring and Long (1991:347n) indicate that the root word from which Dagon derives was once thought to be “fish” but has been understood as “grain” in more recent interpretation.

Knapp (1988:128) states that Dagon appears as a “weather god associated with fertility, and also appears frequently in the Ebla tablets.” Cooley (1968:45) emphasizes that the main concern in Ugaritic mythology is fertility. This underlying focus blended with the myth of Baal and Mot, in which Baal dies and is revived, speaks to the theme of fertility. Given the affinity to agriculture it appears that the term Dagan, pertaining to grain and fertility would be a more accurate interpretation of the name of this deity worshiped by the Philistines.

Van der Toorn et al. (1995:407) struggles with this name and also seems to come out favoring the “grain” interpretation over the other option of “fish.” As emphasized above, it would seem that the grain version would fit the setting of the Philistines, in the agrarian lowlands of southern Palestine. Van der Toorn et al. (1995:408) indicates that Dagon is a Mesopotamian deity who migrated west. The archaeological data reveals that the Philistines had migrated east from the Aegean. It is apparent that they did not bring the worship of Dagon with them from the Aegean in this eastern migration. It would seem then that as the Philistines migrated east and Dagon migrated west they met in Palestine. This was apparently a good combination due to the lasting nature of their relationship. As far as Dagon’s connection to the cult of the dead, there is no archaeological help from the burials of the Philistines presented in this paper. These connections, however, may allow for some conjecture on the part of how the Philistines may have thought about issues pertaining to death.

It is assumed in this paper that when a people group adopted a particular mode of worship they would have adopted the larger whole of the system and not just bits and pieces. In other words, the observable evidences of cultic practice may actually be an

indication of the adoption of other elements not as perceptible as the ones easily identified. It is also likely that most of the cultures of the ancient Near East would have been at least familiar with the other cultures around them and many of them shared common cultural and societal expressions. Since the Philistines fit into the syncretistic pattern in their archaeological affinities it appears they would also fit into the cultic pattern.

In their comments about Nippur, Boshoff and Scheffler (Boshoff, Scheffler, and Spangenberg 2000:26) identify Enlil as the supreme deity of the Sumerian pantheon. It will be seen that Enlil may also reflect some association with the death cult. Bright (1981:35) refers to Enlil as the “lord of the storm,” which carries overtones of the Baal myths. Enlil was seen by the ancient peoples as the source from which the powers of life and death derived. Katz (1990:114) relates an epic myth where a member of the royal household, Lugalbanda father of Gilgamesh, falls ill and calls Enlil, along with three other Sumerian deities to a banquet at the “pit,” where he makes a sacrifice apparently to share in the feast with this council of deities. The myth shows the prince pouring the blood from the sacrifices into the pit, apparently an opening in the earth.

This pit is reminiscent of the corridor through which Samuel emerged from death as seen in 1 Samuel 28:13. This opening in the ground was monitored or perhaps even guarded by the medium of Endor which 1 Samuel 28:3 and 9 specifies to be the keeper of the ritual pit. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible renders this phrase as “medium.” Hoffner’s (1967:385) tracing of the “ob” through various languages and literatures such as Sumerian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Assyrian echoes the death cult concept.

Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1983:15) supply a definition and the number of uses in the Old Testament. It is defined as a “skin-bottle,” or “necromancer.” In other variations renderings show a pit opened in the ground for the purpose of receiving cult sacrifices. Hoffner (1967:385) points out that though the words in various literatures are not necessarily cognates, they may have derived from a common source in several of the languages presented, including the Hebrew version. He also acknowledges the word transitioned through various shades of meaning. This may account for the later biblical rendering of the “spirit” or “medium.” Interestingly, though de Vaux (1961:61) rejected the idea of an Israelite cult of the dead, he stressed that children were “enjoined by the Decalogue” to maintain their duty to parents beyond their death.

Miller (2000:126) emphasizes that the “primary purpose of sacrifice in ancient Mesopotamia was the care and feeding of the gods.” He also cites biblical references supporting this social custom (e.g. Lev 21:6). Scurlock (2000:1889) relates sacrifice of animals as a part of the cult of the Dead. She states that the “family ghosts” would receive, among other food stuffs, an occasional rib section of a “sacrificed animal.”

A related deity is Baal. Van der Toorn et al. (1995:251) and Saint-Laurent (1980:127) have observed that from Ugaritic literature Baal was seen as the son of Dagon. A connection between Dagon and Baal is traceable in the literature as well as the archaeological data. Kuhrt (1998:301) and Craigie (1983:61) state that a large palace was found at Ugarit/Ras Shamra where two temples dominated the site. The temples were dedicated to Baal and Dagon. This type of deity was an important aspect of cult life. Cornelius (1994) traces the iconography of Baal and Reshef. Depictions consistently show a standing, smiting deity, prepared to vanquish any challengers. Cornelius’

research reflects the broad recognition of the deities and affirms the symbiotic relationship of the peoples of the area.

The worship of Baal is seen throughout the Old Testament, but most closely associated with Philistine culture in 2 Kings 1 and the story of Ahaziah the king. His desire was to inquire of Baal-Zebub of Ekron. Ekron, it should be remembered, was one of the five major Philistine sites referred to as the Pentapolis. Judges 10:6 is another example that refers to the Baals and the Astartes/Ashtoreths and may also link the Philistines to Baal.

Most of the Old Testament references to Baal reveal that this deity was worshiped broadly throughout the entire area and was not limited to a particular community or ethnic group. There are individual representations of Baal in different locations, such as seen above at Ekron, and an example given by Schoville (1986:332) of the “Lord (Baal) of Beth-Shan” and Ahlström’s (1994:466) example of “Baal-Perazim.” The Baal of Peor, to be discussed below is also an example of this aspect of the Baal cult. Van der Toorn et al. (1995:157) and Anderson (1991:201n.) affirm that these localized Baals do in fact represent the one Baal.

Baal is seen as a fertility deity worshiped by the various Canaanite communities, and was responsible for rain, crops, and vegetation (Van der Toorn et al.1995:254). The fact that the Bible portrays the Philistines, and the Israelites for that matter (e.g. Psalm 106:28), as having worshiped Baal is further evidence of the syncretistic relationship shared throughout the cultures of this part of the ancient world. Like the worship of Dagon, the Philistines adopted the worship of Baal once they arrived in the Levant and

came under the influence of their new neighbors. Baylis (1996:216) presents a chart that contrasts the fertility deity Baal and the polemical action of Elijah and Elisha.

Baal's relationship to death may be reflected in his relationship to life. The Ugaritic literature has provided insights into the way the ancient peoples viewed Baal and his function as the deity of life. Cooley (1968:74ff) provides significant information linking the Ugaritic texts with Canaanite burials from the biblical period. Van der Toorn et al. (1995:253) conveys that on occasion in the Ugaritic texts Baal, as associated with fertility, is petitioned to provide life. Baal's association with fertility, spring, and the annual return of plant life seems to be an indication of a view toward afterlife. Van der Toorn et al. (1995:254) indicates that it was from the rule of Baal that there was the assurance that this annual re-vegetation of the land would come about. It is possibly implied in this perspective that a people worshiping Baal would have been guaranteed the continuation of life beyond death.

A Ugaritic text that most closely associates Baal with death and the afterlife is one, according to Van der Toorn et al. (1995:256), where Baal overcomes Mot. Mot is the Ugaritic representation of death in the myth. When Baal fights with Mot and vanquishes him, Baal is seen as the lord of the realm of the dead. Such an elevated view of this deity was certainly uppermost in the minds of those who were a part of the cult of Baal. On the other hand the Old Testament repeatedly identifies Yahweh as the Lord of life and death, and as having power to control these aspects of human existence. One example is found in 2 Chronicles 32:24ff where Judahite King Hezekiah was at the point of death, but in the end death did not come, as it states in verse 24, "He (Hezekiah) prayed to the LORD, and he answered him..." In his comments on the mythic cycle of

Baal and Anat, Cross (1997:118) states, “the imitative magic of Canaanite fertility rites could not be more obvious than here. With the victory of Anat, the dead god (Mot) is strewn to fertilize the fields.” In this line of thinking deities were seen as guarantors of the continuation of life through fertilization of the ground.

Xella (2000:2064) states “the myths that center around the figure of the god Baal tell how he was obliged to surrender to Mot at least temporarily, to sink in the underworld, and remain in power over the dead.” Here Baal is envisioned as the lord of the dead. Even more specifically, Van der Toorn et al. (1995:256) reports Baal was seen as lord of the royal family in the realm of the dead, and thus played an important part in the cult of the dead and ancestor veneration.

This paper reiterates M. Dothan’s (Dothan and Dothan 1992:156) observation that the earliest Philistines to settle in Canaan around 1175 likely brought their own Aegean worship practices with them. Only after they arrived and began to settle in the area, does it become apparent that they began to adopt the cult practices of their neighbors, such as the worship of Dagon and Baal. Dothan points to the discovery of the Ashdoda to support the theory regarding the Aegean-style worship of the original Canaanite dwelling Philistines. Kitchen (1978:46) also affirms the later biblical picture of a people fitting into the Dagon worship system of those around them.

The Ashdoda was a mother goddess in a table-like construction that acquired its name because of its representation of the practice and transition of Philistine worship seen in the archaeological excavation at Ashdod. It has already been presented in the section on figurines found in chapter five of this paper. Unfortunately, no Ashdoda have been found in burials at this point, but their presence at the site of Ashdod may

communicate some insights about the cult of the early Philistines. The Ashdoda was a fertility deity, and as was seen in the brief discussion on the Baal cult, the worship of any fertility deity sheds light on the worshiper's views of the afterlife. The deities of fertility brought about the crops and the harvest. They may have died or retreated during dormancy, but in spring they revived to live again. They were the conveyors of life in this ancient mindset.

### **7.3 CULT OF THE DEAD**

For this study the death cult may be defined as the processes by which the living show respect, to the point of veneration or worship of the dead. Cooley (1968:207) asserts this veneration may have been for the purpose of satisfying or placating the deceased, which in the end could work to the benefit or the detriment of the living. There is evidence that the living sometimes also attempted communicating with the dead, or necromancy. In turn the living could receive information, blessings, or help. This view may also have at times allowed for the deification of the deceased. Funerary rites themselves have been defined by Schmidt (1996:6) as the practices performed between death and the arrival in the afterworld. Perhaps this definition could be subjected to the question of exactly when does the individual arrive in the afterlife and how can this be verified? Such subjectivity makes assurance difficult without written record of the

ancient culture's thoughts, but this chapter will seek hints to this aspect of Philistine existence.

This lack of literary material has been viewed as both positive and negative. Pitard (2002:145) cautions that without it the problems of interpretation increase, and he (149) contends that very little can be known about specific beliefs regarding death concepts from the material remains. He (150) urges that "less is more" when it comes to these types of interpretations. He (151) cites Schaeffer's interpretations from Minet el-Beide as support for his position. Certainly Schaeffer's views were elaborate and premature, but the baby shouldn't be thrown out with the bathwater.

On the other hand, Lewis (2002:171ff) cites numerous advantages the study of material remains brings to present understanding of the ancient views of death. Just like texts, Lewis emphasizes, the stones and bones of archaeology must be interpreted. To their advantage, he states, the physical anthropologist can sift through their data without sorting out the layers of editorial activity. In addition to concrete assessments such as illnesses, parasites, and causes of death, Lewis (2002:173) states that the archaeologist may also be able to identify more abstract areas of death concepts like "stages of burial rites, and sometimes even repeated actions that might constitute a cult of the dead." Silberman (1998:268-275) stresses that interpretations of material data tend to be influenced by one's own familiar context, and that measures should be taken to avoid such a politically-oriented conclusion. This problem is accentuated when the attempt is made to read the literary in addition to the material records.

It seems that there must be a sense of balance between the literary and archaeological aspects. Proper procedure would call for each discipline to be carefully

researched in its own context, before any attempt is made to blend the two together. Cornelius (1994:13), in his work on the iconography of Ba'al and Reshef, emphasizes that the "iconography should first be subjected to a full analysis, using iconographic criteria." This same principle can apply to the study at hand. Archaeological material, as it pertains to the burials under scrutiny, must first be studied for what they are—material evidence. Once this process has been given its full opportunity to reveal what it can, then the literary data can be used to shed further light and build on the acquired knowledge. One example of this procedure applied to archaeology, literature, and Philistine studies is Finkelstein's (2000:161) article entitled *The Philistine Settlements: When, Where and How Many?* His stated plan in the article was to "review the archaeological data on their own terms before submitting them to the text."

In the study of ancient cultures from Iron Age I Canaan the concern does not seem to be whether or not there was a presence of the cult of the dead, but to what degree it was practiced. Scholars do not agree on the issue of a cult of the dead in Israelite history. Lewis (1989:1) argues in favor of the cult in his search for true Yahwism in the Bible. He cites minimalists such as de Vaux, Kaufmann, and others as arguing against the cult's existence in Israelite context of Old Testament literature. Kaufmann (1960:313) acknowledges the reality of the cult in the minds of the Old Testament people yet recalls the Deuteronomic prohibition against some of the specific elements related to it. De Vaux (1961:60) states there is "no foundation" for the idea that Old Testament Israelites either gave food to the dead out of fear of the deceased or to seek their protection. Bloch-Smith (2002:140) includes Schmidt on the list of minimalists,

suggesting that his requiring veneration of the dead before granting a death cult is too strict of a requirement for this determination.

This paper suggests three reasons it may be suggested that there was a cult of the dead among the people either identified as Philistine or influenced by them. First of all, the symbiotic model supports the presence of a cult of the dead. The Philistines shared aspects of cultural expression with others around them. They are seen as adapting relatively quickly to their surroundings, and expressing similar cultural features as their neighbors. Second, the archaeological data has shown that there is ample evidence to support that the communities using the tombs at the targeted sites were involved in the cult of the dead. Third, as is supported in this chapter, the literary material also suggests this association with the cult. In one sense the literary records may simply provide commentary on what has already been seen in the pursuit of the material data.

The ancient peoples' concern for their family members in the afterlife, and their successful journey to the underworld, is repeatedly apparent with every bowl and jug found in the burial setting. It was important that the dead be nourished and well adorned for the journey. Matthews (1996:130) affirms that the burial offerings would have been placed in the tombs for the purpose of aiding the deceased in this way. His comments are focused on the Israelite Monarchical period but the same interpretation could apply to Iron Age I since many of the same types of burial offerings are traceable in the earlier context. Brichto (1974:5) cites Coulanges (1955:40) who considered the family religion to be the "constituent principle of the ancient family." Coulanges' work included ancestor worship as a part of the familial system. Meijer (2003:52) cites the feeding of

the dead as an obligatory ritual of the family, not just for their journey to the underworld but for their continual existence there.

Hints of Philistine practices of the cult of the dead may be found in the context of the Samuel account when the ark had been taken into cities within Philistine territory and individuals were dying due to some indefinable disease, as has been mentioned briefly in an earlier section. The question is raised as to how they should send the ark back to Israel. In 1 Samuel 6:2, the Philistines call for the “priests and the diviners” in order to inquire as to the methodology of the ark’s return. It seems insightful that they did not ask whether or not it should be returned, but only how it should be returned. Chapter five indicates that the “tumors” were causing either sickness or death, and the people were panicking throughout the land. This apparent fear is compounded by what Curtis (1990:46-47) has pointed out as the Philistine perception of the ark as representing the presence of the Israelite God.

The reference to 1 Samuel 28 and Saul’s inquiry at the witch of Endor has already been discussed, but another pursuit related to the cult of the dead may be brought out in connection to this story. The issue of necromancy is raised throughout the Old Testament, and is viewed in a negative light. The incident with Saul, the medium, and the Philistines is certainly such an example of this negative view. It is also an example of how such practices were in use from time to time. Saul is consistently viewed negatively by the Deuteronomistic historian. This is seen in contrast to the positive view generally presented of David. In the text Saul has the medium contact Samuel, who had been dead for some time. Samuel is being brought forth out of the pit in order to communicate with the living. This is a very vivid example of necromancy from the Old Testament. Most of

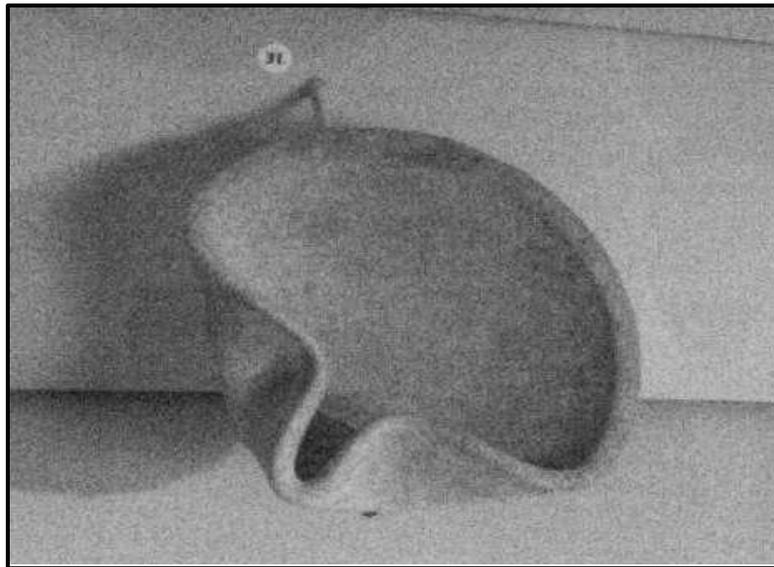
the biblical references are more implicit than as seen here. Miller (2000:72), while stating that the Saul passage is the only clear example of Old Testament necromancy, cites 1 Samuel 15:23; Ezekiel 21:21; Zephaniah 10:2; and 2 Kings 23:24 as examples of these implicit references. Lace (1972:140) emphasizes the prophetic perspective by citing Isaiah 8:18-20, part of which states “a nation may surely seek guidance of its gods, of the dead on behalf of the living, for an oracle or a message?”

Isaiah 65:4 provides further insight into the nature of this practice. The prophet states, those “who sit inside tombs and pass the night in secret places...” The implication here may be that those who were spending the night in the tombs were doing so for the purpose of inquiring of the dead. Through the study of the tomb contents insights may be gained regarding this practice within the cultures showing Philistine influence in their burials. It is suggested here that the lamps may be a link to this tradition.

There were a number of burials where, due to the presence of lamps, this practice appears to be standard funerary custom. Even in the simple and cist graves at Azor, as mentioned above, lamps were present in the graves. The lamps, as also indicated above, may have served various purposes. Some lamps, such as these found in the simple and cist type burials, may have been more for the benefit of the deceased than for the living. Perhaps the lamps were placed in the burials to assist the deceased in the dark journey to the underworld.

There may be a different interpretation for the lamps in the more accessible type tombs. Perhaps these lamps served a dual purpose for the living and the dead. The more practical view given in an earlier chapter had to do with the care of the deceased’s tomb,

which would have been a part of the family responsibility in the death cult, and would have been carried on as a result of duty to one's ancestors. The best representation for the presence of lamps from the burials explored in this research would be Gezer's tomb 59 where a large number of lamps were found. Amazingly, one hundred vessels were found in this tomb, and forty of them were lamps. This comprised a significant and an atypically high percentage of the contents of the tomb. An example in contrast to this high percentage of lamps, can be seen in Tomb 58 also at Gezer, where only one lamp was found.



**Plate 15.** *Typical Iron Age I lamp.* Photo by Fugitt. Courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The question of the number of lamps was already dealt with in chapter five, so here the issue has to do with the possibility of these lamps being the evidence of necromancy

or the consulting of the dead. If it was custom for family members to spend the night in the tombs as Isaiah implied, they may have wished to have light for their long nocturnal vigil. Bloch-Smith (1992:121) contends that the many admonitions against consulting the dead are evidence to its wide spread practice. It should be added that the practice was not limited to non-Israelites, but most likely found its way into Israel itself on occasion.

Another facet of cultural practice with a possible connection to the cult of the dead, which may be illuminated through the literary record, is that of the use of figurines as a preferable means of divination rather than direct contact with the deceased. The biblical passage found in 2 Kings 23:24 appears to support this supposition. The passage is in reference to Josiah and reflects the historiographer's Deuteronomic memory of this good king of Judah. It states:

*“Moreover Josiah put away the mediums, wizards, teraphim, idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah had found in the house of the LORD.” (NRSV)*

Cogan and Tadmor (1988:291) state that the most likely linguistic connection to the “terapim” is with Hittite “tarpi,” which they cite as a spirit that can work toward the benefit or the detriment of the individual.

The bowl as a burial offering may also be hinted at in the biblical and other literatures, as can be seen below. It is suggested in this paper that the bowls and other burial offerings were more than sympathetic gestures of grieving family members, but rather reflect the veneration of the deceased. A specific cultural origin may be difficult to trace for the bowls as a burial offering. Brug (1985:162) considers them to be a “Canaanite trait,” yet they appear in repeated cross cultural settings in the archaeological

records, including those contexts identified as having Philistine influence. To Brug's credit, they may be a Canaanite trait, in that the amalgamated cultures of Canaan appear to have adopted this practice as a part of their funerary procedure. Whatever their background, the evidence supports the interpretation that the bowls in the burials are material signs of the death cult. Specifically, the bowls would seem to support the practice of the feeding of the dead.

Given the frequent appearance of this particular burial offering, it seems this practice was of utmost importance among the respective funerary rites. Bowls from the graves reflecting Philistine influence were discussed in the chapter on burial contents. As was indicated in the outlining of the material data, the bowl was the most common of all offerings. This status gives apparent strength to the notion that the ancient people took the duty to their ancestors very seriously. Specifics on the bowls and their contexts can be seen in chapter five. Their reference here is to allow the literary material to shed some possible light on this area of burial customs.

Deuteronomy 26:14 and Genesis 28:22 give examples of a biblical view toward the relationship between the living and the dead. These passages do not refer specifically to the Philistines, though they do contribute to the understanding of this particular aspect of the cult from the literary perspective.

Deuteronomy 26:14 states, *"I have not eaten of it while in mourning; I have not removed any of it while I was unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead."* (NRSV)

Psalm 106:28 illustrates that the Israelites at some time had adopted the practice of the Moabites while they were in their land. The Psalms text here states they had attached themselves to a local version of Baal from Mount Peor in Moab, and eaten the "banquets

of the dead.” It should be reiterated that these local Baals all link back to Baal (Van der Toorn et al. 1995:157).

The initial link with Philistine culture from this passage would be the connection to Baal, the significance of which was developed in an earlier section. The negative view of the biblical writer toward the related cult is expressed in this particular verse. The last phrase appears to have a double meaning. From this perspective, not only were those connected to the Baal cult eating the feasts of the dead, but the deities they were expressing their loyalties to were dead deities, or as the NIV translates “lifeless gods.”

Dahood (1970:73) refers to these banquets as “funeral banquets.” This practice is mentioned in the Psalms passage referenced above and in Numbers 25:2ff. Neither of these texts looks upon this practice in a favorable light. Dahood identifies its connection to the Canaanite cult as being a part of the disapproval with which it is presented here in the texts. He also cites the possibility that this feast would have been related to the ancestor worship and the “deification of the dead.” He mentions that such beliefs were reflected in the Ugaritic texts, in which Baal was a key participant.

The concept of this feast being related to the origin of sacrificial rites was referred to above, with the intention of raising the issue again at this point. As it pertains to the cult of the dead in general and in the feeding of the dead specifically, this practice may be tied to earlier Mesopotamian mythology. As mentioned, Lugalbanda had invoked or invited the four deities to attend the banquet at the pit, and there they feasted together. Whether this is the explanation for the beginning of the sacrificial system is a matter of conjecture. The usage of the term “pit” for the entrance of the afterlife is traceable in other literatures. For example, Psalm 88:4 uses this term to denote death. One thing that

seems fairly clear is that there is the sense in which deities would commune with humans on earth. There was also the idea of eating together as a part of that communion.

Perhaps the numerous bowls found in graves reflect this practice.

There are multiple examples of eating and drinking vessels from Philistine influenced tombs as has been indicated in the discussion thus far. It seems apparent from the common occurrence of these vessels that caring for and feeding the deceased was an important part of the rites of burial. It is also significant that this practice is also visible in the simple inhumations where follow-up care would have been impossible because of the body being completely suffused in earth.

Bailey (1979:21) has provided examples from other literary sources to support the custom of the feeding of the dead. The first comes from the mother of Nabonidus, and is thus a Neo-Babylonian source. The document indicates that overwhelming numbers of animals and produce were required for the monthly responsibilities to the dead. These offerings were part of her ancestral duties to be fulfilled. It appears that she was accustomed to preparing quite a feast each month on behalf of the deceased.

The other source Bailey cites is from an Assyrian incantation text. It states, “if the ‘hand’ of the ghost of his father and mother seizes a man...when the spirits (*etemmu*) of the dead are mustered, you make a sailboat (and) load it with provisions for them.” Bailey’s assessment of these rituals is essentially that they would not have endured if they were merely a “social convention devoid of the fear which the literature suggests.”

Lewis (1989:31-32) cites the Mesopotamian “Kispu” text, also called “The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty,” which states, “Come (O dead ancestors), eat this, drink this, (and) bless Ammisaduqa the son of Ammiditana, the king of Babylon.”

Commenting on this particular passage, Lewis emphasizes the care of the dead as a means to invoke their blessing on the living, but he also relates that to ignore the dead could lead to one's misfortune.

#### **7.4 TREATMENT OF BODIES**

There is no Philistine literary source describing the way Philistines treated the bodies of their deceased. It may be possible to imagine how they may have treated the bodies of their enemies by the available literature. Four related biblical incidents are found in Joshua 7:26; 8:29; 10:26; and 2 Samuel 18:17-18. These are strictly Israelite references, but may reflect a common practice in that time. Here they were stoned, burned, hanged, possibly impaled, buried in pits or caves, and covered under a pile of rocks. The biblical account conveys some hints as to how the Philistines may have treated their enemies in the story of the death of Saul and his sons at Mount Gilboa.

In similar action to that of the Israelites mentioned above, the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:8ff) came to the field of battle to glean valuables from the bodies of the conquered enemies. When they found the bodies of Saul and his sons, verse 9 indicates, they cut off Saul's head and took his armor. Word was then sent to all Philistines that the

enemy was defeated. Curiously verse 10 relates that they fastened Saul's body to the wall of Beth Shean.

It was apparently some time later that the people of Jabesh-Gilead came for the bodies and, in a seemingly peculiar action, cremated them (verse 12). After burning the bodies the bones were buried. Cremation is odd given the rare incidents of Iron Age cremations verified archaeologically, but its mention here may indicate that the practice was not viewed as negatively in some circumstances as it was in others. Matthews (1996:128) suggests that the bodies may have been burned due to the "dismemberment and advanced state of decay of the bodies." Judging from an analysis of Bloch-Smith's catalog of burials, the only Iron Age I cremation from a Philistine context was identified at Azor, with the remains buried in a jar in a type of cist structure (cf. M. Dothan 1992:116). The later description of these events (cf. Myers 1965:81), provided by the Chronicler, includes information not found in the Samuel version of Saul's demise. 1 Chronicles 10:7ff states that the Israelites left their cities when they saw that Saul and his army were losing the battle, and the Philistines took possession of the cities and occupied them.

Given the proximity of Beth Shean from Gilboa, its mention here in this account may shed light on the possible presence of Philistines. Beth Shean, it should be remembered, was one of the sites where anthropoid clay coffins were found. These were the coffins that bore the feathered, fluted, and zigzag headdresses that corresponded to those from the depictions on the walls at Medinet Habu. There is also the issue of a possible eleventh or tenth century "late" Philistine vessel found in a burial at Beth Shean. As a point of comparison, the Philistines are seen here as treating the bodies of their

enemies in much the same way the Israelites were portrayed as having treated theirs in the above passages.

This paper seeks to make some observations pertaining to the Philistines, the cult of the dead, and the treatment of the dead. At this point the comments are largely drawn from the literary material. Some intriguing parallels can be seen in the passage concerning David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), but also in other passages in the Old Testament where Philistines are implicated. As stated these parallels are drawn from the literary sources, but they find some support in the archaeological data. It seems that in several incidents the biblical material makes reference to activities or customs apparently practiced by those communities utilizing the graves where Philistine influence is found. The text in the Samuel account seems to reveal that Goliath was already dead when he was decapitated. It will be remembered that skull burials were referenced in an earlier chapter of this paper. An example of this practice is Grave D8, a simple burial at Azor containing seven skulls, along with fragments of two Philistine bowls. According to 1 Samuel 17:51, David slew Goliath and cut off his head.

Another instance in this chapter is found in the recollection of the words of Goliath previous to the encounter with David where he (verse 44) promises to feed David's flesh to the "fowls of the air." This possible "curse" may or may not constitute an act of cursing in an official cult fashion, but it becomes one in the practical sense when one does not receive a proper burial (Craffert, 1999:47). Cooley (1968:57) affirms that "to go unburied would be a terrible end." He draws his comments from Genesis 47:29ff and 2 Samuel 2:5. Meijer (2003:52) refers to the lack of burial in the ancient Near

Eastern mind as a “severe punishment, reserved for women who aborted, enemies killed in battle, and other sinners.”

Perchance when the biblical sages were passing along the stories of their forefathers, they enjoyed emphasizing the irony of the narrative. That is, perhaps they stressed, we not only defeated the Philistines but in fact gave them a taste of their own medicine. On the other hand, an incident found in 2 Samuel 4:12 regarding the head of Ish-Bosheth is an example of beheading and no reference to Philistines. Another example can be seen in 2 Kings 9-10 and Jehu’s bloody take-over of the house of Ahab, where the heads of Ahab’s seventy sons were piled in heaps at the gate of Jezreel. It could be suggested that such texts may be an affirmation of common practice at that time in history.

A similar literary parallel may be imagined when the residents of Jabesh-Gilead cremated the bodies of Saul and his sons, as mentioned above. Cremation is normally seen in the Israelite context of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible as being reserved for criminals and egregious social or moral offenders, and certainly not for kings. Bloch-Smith (1992:112) cites Genesis 38:24, Leviticus 20:14, and Leviticus 21:9 as examples of this practice. Leviticus 21:9 states, “when the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.” On the other hand, and in the Philistine context, it appears to be an acceptable treatment of the body in the single incident at Azor Grave 63.

From the literary record an incident pertaining to the Philistines can be seen. Judges 15 relates an episode from the life of Samson. This section begins what Denton and Hoppe (1991:322n) have called a “cycle of revenge.” Samson’s wife had informed

the people of her town of the answer to a riddle Samson had given them. He had also promised a payoff if they were able to find the answer. When he discovered what his wife had done he flew into a rage, took clothing from Philistines to pay Philistines for solving the riddle, and went home in anger. It appeared he would not return. Meanwhile his father-in-law, thinking Samson was not returning, gave his daughter to another man.

When Samson returned to retrieve his wife and found out she was already living with someone else, he again flew into a rage and burned their fields of standing grain. When the Philistines discovered it was because the Timnite had given his daughter to another man and brought on the rage of Samson, they “came up and burned her and her father.” After committing this social faux pas, the man and his daughter are seen as deserving of death by burning in this Philistine setting.

## **7.5 COMMUNAL TOMBS**

Communal tombs may be identified in the archaeological setting as chambers or caves that are accessible to successive generations and are utilized for community or family burials. They are often associated with repositories in the forms of annexes or recesses used for secondary burials of the bones of previous generations. The specific details of all these features are discussed in an earlier chapter on the subject of tomb

types. The issue at this point in the paper concerns how insights into these types of community tombs may be traced in the literary records. Though communal burials seemed to serve practical and familial purposes, Meijer (2003:55) suggests that to modern thinking such burials may also suggest a “low degree of emphasis on the individual.”

Communal tombs associated with Philistine material evidence were listed and discussed in chapter three on burials and tombs. Examples of those discussed were Beth Shemesh’s Cave 11, Tell Gezer’s Tomb 9, and the well-known 500 series from Tell el-Farah. At these and other sites throughout Iron Age I Canaan, Philistine presence or influence has been indicated in communal tombs. Several issues surface in the research of these tombs that may be highlighted in the literary record.

Such a practice is traceable throughout various cultures of the broader Mediterranean/Aegean world from this ancient time period. The origin of the rectangular rock-cut chamber tombs has already been discussed earlier and does not need to be revisited at this point. It may suffice to say here that these chambers would have typically been used as communal or family tombs. Bloch-Smith (1992:116) cites several “family burials” seen as occurring during the period of the united Monarchy. Second Samuel 3:32, 4:12, and 17:23, are biblical examples of this practice from Israelite culture, which by their very presence indicates that the practice was a cross-cultural custom.

It appears that the family tombs also helped to designate territories in the ancient times. This way of thinking would have added fuel to the fires ignited through the border skirmish seen in the Old Testament between Philistia and Israel. Both people groups were fighting for land rights, and the locations for tombs would have logically been a part

of their motivation. As a literary example, Matthews (1996:75) cites Genesis 33:18-20 as the precursor to the burial of Joseph's bones as recorded in Joshua 24:32.

Following the thought of the family tomb, which seems to be a likely explanation for communal type burials, the concept of the deceased being buried with their fathers should also be discussed. 1 Kings 14:31; 15:8, 24; 22:50; 2 Kings 8:24; 9:28; 12:21; 14:20; 15:7, 38; 16:20; and Nehemiah 3:16 provide a biblical context. It is not the purpose of this paper to delve into the details of the tombs in the city of David as seen in these passages, but simply to cite literary illustrations of the idea of being buried with one's fathers. This concept may be envisioned in the ancient mind.

It seems likely that the Philistine communal graves were used as family burial facilities as were others throughout the area. Cooley's (1968:82) research of Canaanite burials appears to support this presupposition. He also submits that the familiar biblical statement concerning one being gathered to their fathers was a reference to burial in the family tomb. The phrase is an obvious euphemism for death contributed by the biblical writers or editors who were aware of this common burial practice which spanned various periods of ancient history. Much like the families mentioned in the Old Testament as Israelite, these communities cared about their families and livelihood. They were concerned about the availability of land for future generations, and whether they would have a land upon which to bury their dead and promote their own lifestyle and customs. Issues important to contemporary cultures bear a resemblance to those traceable in the archaeological and literary records of the ancient past. The presence of the communal tombs in the Philistine contexts also emphasizes these facts of life.

## **7.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has sought to allow the literary information to address the burials discussed. The basic process here has been to cite the specific customs revealed through the archaeological material connected to Philistine material culture, and then to trace any possible literary association to these same or similar practices. It has identified the deities of the Philistines in the literary material of the Old Testament and traced comparable information regarding these deities in other literatures. Through this process the chapter then tied these deities to death and related issues. Ugaritic and Mesopotamian literature have been incorporated into the discussion at this stage of the procedure.

The literary material has also shown the symbiotic model, as was seen in each phase of the discussion on the archaeological data. There are certain basic customs that appear cross-culturally in the ancient Near East. The Philistines, even though they were a migratory people whose original home was not Canaan, were not able to withstand the

influence of the amalgamated cultures of this time in history. The literary material appears to under gird this fact, and shows them fitting into the syncretistic pattern of their social environment.

Another important aspect of the funerary customs of the ancient peoples, and one that is traceable in the literary records, is the cult of the dead. As was stated in an earlier chapter, this issue is not whether there was a cult of the dead in ancient Philistine thought, but only to what degree can it be measured. The importance of certain burial offerings such as bowls and lamps, already emphasized in the archaeological records, was illuminated in this chapter by the literary material. This chapter sought to associate Philistine concepts of death and related issues, through citing literary references where both Philistines and specific customs or practices were found.

One of the apparent customs of the veneration of ancestors was feeding the dead and caring for their remains and tombs. Figurines and bowls were mentioned in relationship to their presence in Philistine tombs and the literary material. The striking emphasis on the feeding of the dead is visible in the many burials where bowls appear to be a standard item placed with the deceased at the time of interment. The depth of this particular custom was emphasized by its presence in early Mesopotamian mythology as well as the biblical literature.

Necromancy was also discussed as one of the aspects of the death cult. The lamps, highlighted in Isaiah 65:4 were brought out in the discussion as pertaining to this practice. Body treatments, cremation, and communal/family tombs were all discussed in light of the available and applicable literature.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### ***SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS***

#### **8.1 EVALUATING THE RESEARCH**

This paper has identified burials from Iron Age I Canaan where there is evidence of Philistine presence or influence for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the communities utilizing these graves. Along the way it has sought to emphasize some of the limitations to this particular study. Some of the limitations that hinder the research and prevent a clear picture of Philistine burials are that there are no cemeteries from any of the key sites that are unquestionably Philistine, and that there are no Philistine written records giving either instructions or proscriptions related to the issues of death and burial.

Working within the confines of these limitations, this paper has traced customs and traditions in context alongside Philistine pottery or some other representation of Philistine culture. Other than the characteristic bichrome pottery, an example of another kind of possible Philistine cultural representation would be the feathered headdress from the anthropoid coffin found at Beth Shean's Tomb 66, and the zigzag and beaded versions from Tomb 90.

Once the sites and customs were identified, the paper sought to relate these customs to those of other groups living in the area. Though the focus of the paper was not necessarily intended to be a comparative study, a certain level of comparison becomes essential when studying the Philistines. The results of these limited comparative analyses have been identified in this paper as the symbiotic model. The heart of this model, as portrayed here, is that there were many cultures sharing ideas and concepts with each other during this critical and transitional period of Old Testament history. There are, in fact, shared customs from one ethnic community to the next which cannot be easily distinguished at times. These customs and concepts may be related to death, burial, and afterlife, or any other facet of culture for that matter.

## 8.2 WHAT HAS BEEN SAID?

This paper has attempted to limit its research and analysis to the burials in Canaan that date to Iron I and provide some evidence of cultural link to the Philistine culture. Those burials have been listed and explored as to their type, contents, and other related aspects and concerns. A Philistine biocultural profile has also been presented. The concept was used by Sheridan in her anthropological work with the skeletal remains from the tombs at St. Stephen's monastery. The three key facets of Philistine societal existence making up this profile are the biological, historical, and archaeological. This profile was outlined in chapter two as a part of the solution to the research problem, and in subsequent chapters may be traced as the background material is gathered and presented.

Types of burials and tombs were distinguished in chapter three. The symbiotic model was clearly decipherable in this phase of the study. It appears that the graves bearing Philistine presence or influence show a variety of types from one site to the other. Certain cultural links can be made from an observation of these tomb types. The rectangular rock-cut tombs appear to have some antecedents in the Mycenaean culture. This practice likely migrated from its Aegean origin to Canaan. This coincides with the Aegean derivation of the Philistine culture traceable in the pottery evidence from Philistine sites. The most common grave types from the context of Philistine culture presented in the paper were simple pit burials. The best site for the study of these graves, by virtue of the number of interments, was Azor.

Maps have been presented to help clarify locations, as well as specific sites where Philistine evidence has been found in graves. Certain irregular trends in burial customs were also traced in the third chapter, such as the single incident of cremation at Azor Grave 63. This rare find identifies the only Iron Age I cremation within a context related to Philistine culture. Some possible conclusions can be drawn as a result of the evidence from this grave.

Pig remains may serve as supporting material. Chapter four included a graph showing Canaanite sites where pig remains have been found, along with the percentages of remains compared to those of other animal bones. This was obviously not a common custom in the Philistine-type burials presented in this paper, but warrants serious consideration in light of the data, both archaeological and literary.

The fourth chapter also presented the use of repositories in the custom of secondary burial. This common practice is traceable throughout various periods of Old Testament history and, like other customs pertaining to burial, by Iron Age I they appear as a cross-cultural tradition. This aspect, among others, set the stage for a more thorough discussion of the communal family tomb concept in a later chapter. This chapter purposed some of the possibilities for the study of skeletal remains and the types of information that could be gained from such analyses.

Chapter five focused on the contents of the graves presented. Vessels, figurines, and jewelry make up a significant percentage of these contents. A few other types of miscellaneous items such as knives and other personal effects were also mentioned. This chapter sought to present basic concepts as to the purpose of items being placed in the burials. It has been affirmed throughout this paper that the ancient peoples perceived of

an afterlife in which deceased individuals would be in need of items, whether food or adornments, and that the living family members were able and perhaps duty bound to provide.

It appears that some of these communities believed the journey to the underworld began at the point of death and was not finalized until the decomposition process was completed some months later and maybe even longer. The responsibility of the living was critical during this period, beginning at death. The manner of interment, the provisions made available in the burial, and the follow-up care in the months afterward placed the burden of responsibility on the living. This was seen as a duty to be fulfilled as part of the loyalty to one's ancestors. Such veneration, with its accompanying expressions, appears as part of the cultic rituals and practices pertaining to death and funerary customs.

The means and methods, traceable in the burials presented, were a mixture of cultural expression. Virtually every identifiable Philistine custom pertaining to death is traceable through the study of other cultures in Iron Age I Canaan. In other words, people groups of this period were either employing analogous customs, or there were expressions of other cultures present in the burial settings alongside the identifiable Philistine traits. Either way there was definitely quite a bit of cultural exchange taking place. It can be affirmed that Iron Age I Levantine peoples must have thought about death in comparable fashion, and sought to prepare the deceased for the afterlife in many of the same ways.

Anthropoid clay coffins and their relationship to the Philistine culture were presented in chapter six. The overwhelming amount of Egyptian evidence within the

context of these coffins gives solid confirmation to the Egyptian origin of this burial custom. The fact that this custom had predecessors throughout Egypt contributes significantly to this provenance. The appearance of Philistine pottery in context at Tell el-Farah and the unique headdresses found on the coffins at Beth Shean give cause for a consideration of Philistine influence on these graves. This evidence was presented and pursued throughout the chapter.

Chapter seven incorporated the study of literary material into the discussion. The basic procedure of the chapter was to cite burial customs already defined in earlier sections of the paper and trace literary references to those practices. Literary data from various cultural backgrounds were brought into the discussion at this point. Old Testament passages pertaining to the customs previously presented were highlighted. Those that gave particular insight were passages which involved some aspect of death along with the presence of Philistines in the text.

## 8.2 LOOKING AHEAD

The future of this study holds a number of opportunities. From the anthropological study of related skeletal material, more could be discovered as to the background of the individuals interred at the sites explored. It will not be surprising if the results show the same confluence of cultures present in other areas of Philistine existence. Forensic analysis may also identify certain causes of death. It could especially assist in particular instances such as Grave D9 at Azor where there was evidence that the body had only been partially burned.

Two key Philistine sites are currently being excavated in Israel, and the future of Philistine studies proves to be enhanced by the efforts there. Archaeological materials and discoveries from Ashkelon and Tell es-Safi/Gath have produced helpful information regarding the Philistines. If cemeteries could be found at either of these sites from the Iron Age I occupation, the picture of Philistine burial customs would be greatly advanced.

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