4.12 MUSIC

4.12.1 Introduction

Music permeated the culture of ancient Israel. In the Iron Age, the place of music in the life of the Israelites cannot be overestimated. The Bible is rich with references to music and the role that music played in the social, political, and religious aspects of ancient Israel. Artifacts and ancient texts reveal that the people of ancient Israel wove music into nearly every aspect of society. Festive choruses enriched marriage ceremonies with music and dancing. Music expressed the joy and thanksgiving when the sheep were sheared and the grapes were gathered. Victorious armies were met with the songs of women, celebrating the return of Israel's warriors, and apparently, music sprang up spontaneously and effortlessly in day to day life as well (Burgh 1999:1).

4.12.2 Introduction to Musical Instruments

In the religion of the Israelites, musical instruments played meaningful roles in the festivals and in the worship at the Temple. In spite of the breadth and depth of music in ancient Israel and the many references to the types of instruments in Jewish texts, the instruments themselves are never explicitly described. Because of the uncertainty that surrounds the nature of ancient Israel’s musical instruments, it is difficult to determine with certainty the attributes of their musical instruments. This dissertation will try to reconstruct the attributes of musical instruments based on the ancient texts and archaeological finds. In the past few decades the method of classifying instruments has changed slightly. The old

method of classification used the external characteristics of instruments in order to classify them. The new method arranges instruments according to the way that the instrument produces a tone. While the new method may offer valuable insights into the instruments that we use today, the old method better suits the instruments of ancient Israel. In this dissertation, the musical instruments of ancient Israel will be divided into three basic categories: percussive instruments, wind instruments and stringed instruments (Burgh 1999:3).

4.12.2.1 Percussive Instruments

Among the three groups of instruments, the most primitive of the three is undoubtedly the percussion instruments. It is ironic that the first two instruments that the Bible mentions are not percussion instruments, but examples of instruments in the other two groups. Perhaps the reason that underlies this irony is the ambiguous nature of percussive instruments. While the stringed instruments and the wind instruments are meant specifically for making music, percussive instruments often blur the line between religious function, music and dance. The percussion instruments in ancient Israel were simple, but they were also numerous.

The Hebrew term, “tof,” includes most of the percussion instruments in Israel during the Iron Age. “Tof” probably refers to various hand-held drums and tambourines. See Figure 4.12-2b. “Tuppin” (the plural form of “tof”) are usually connected with dancing and with joyous occasions.

The tof would have been an easy instrument to play, and would lend itself to rhythmically supporting dancing. Perhaps because of its connection to dancing, the tof is played by women the vast majority of the time. There is possibly one reference to men playing tuppin, but this is only an interpretation of the text, whereas Biblical texts clearly document many examples of women playing tuppin. It is even possible that the tof had a unique connection to marriage ceremonies. The Talmud hints at this connection when it refers to the drum as “erush,” which means betrothed.

Even though tuppin was probably the most common instrument in ancient Israel, apparently no tuppin have been recovered. There is, however, ample archaeological evidence to support the existence of tuppin in ancient Israel. Many small, pottery figurines have been found with hand-held drums in their hands. Figurines dating back to the Iron Age were found at Achziv, Shikmona and Megiddo. One of the figurines, the one that was found at Nir-David, dates a little bit later, to the 5th or 4th century. This figurine is unique because it shows a man playing a tof. This artifact reveals that although it was uncommon for a man to play the tof, it was not unheard of.

The second type of percussion instrument is called the “tziltzilim,” which resembles cymbals. See Figure 4.12-1a. According to Josephus cymbals were commonly made of brass in ancient Israel (Whiston 1978:237). They came in two variations: the first type was hit horizontally and the second type was hit vertically. Cymbals are mentioned for the first time in the Bible when the Ark of the Covenant is moved to Jerusalem. Cymbals are thought to have been used

in temple worship in order to cue the choir to begin singing. It is even thought that cymbals might have been used for conducting music in a simplistic manner. A percussion instrument that is similar to the cymbals is the metziltayim, or clapper. These are probably similar to the cymbals, only smaller (Burgh 1999:3-4).

Another class of percussion instruments, the “menaanaim,” is difficult to define. The archaeological information reveals a large number of rattles to which this word could be referring, but Jewish texts are not forthcoming about the attributes of the “menaanaim.” What we do know is that “menaanaim” comes from the verb “ʼnua,” which means “to shake” or “to move about.” Rattles have been found at Beit Shemesh and Hebron from the Iron Age and are consistent with the menaanaim in Biblical texts. See Figure 4.12-1b. An alternate, or possibly additional, meaning of this word would be a “sistrum,” which the Hebrews brought with them from Egypt.

The last percussive instruments to discuss are various types of bells. “Paamonim” were attached to the hem of the priest's robe. These bells were on the priest’s robe so that if he died in the presence of the Lord, those that were outside the tabernacle would know. Another type of bell, the “mezillot” were hung on horses, and probably were bigger than the “paamonim” (Sendrey 1969:385). Bells that have been found in archaeological digs only date back as far as the Roman period, but the Biblical text seems to be very clear about the existence of bells in ancient Israel.

4.12.2.2 Wind Instruments

The wind instruments are the most diverse of the three groups of instruments in ancient Israel. Among the wind instruments, there is a variety of instruments ranging from the delicate music of the khalil to the blaring sound of the shofar. In spite of the variety of wind instruments, they can be divided into two groups: the reed instruments and the horns.

Ugav is an instrument that is only mentioned four times in the Bible. It is often rendered in translations as a flute or a pipe, but there are a great number of variations in the translations. The Talmud correlates the ugav with the “khalil.” Ultimately, an understanding of what the ugav is, has not been reached, and will have to await further archaeological evidence (Sendrey 1969:310).

The most prominent of the reed instruments is probably the “khalil.” “Khalil” is generally translated as “flute,” or “flute-like instruments," (Sendrey 1969:310). It is mentioned in five verses in the Bible. The khalil is similar to the Greek “aulos.” Both are double reed instruments that are more similar to the modern oboe or bassoon, than to the flute. Archaeologists have uncovered representations of the khalil at Megiddo and at Achziv. The bronze figure playing the khalil that was found at Megiddo is thought to be from around 1300-1200 BCE. At Achiv, a pottery figure playing a khalil was found that dates back to the Iron Age II. See Figure 4.12-2a. One reason for the khalil’s importance was that it was enjoyed in Israel’s religion. For twelve days of the year, the khalil was played before the altar in groups with two to twelve instruments. (Polin 1954:62). The abuv is another oboe-

like instrument that was similar to the khalil and was used in the second Temple.

Unlike other instruments of ancient Israel, the “shofar” is still in use today in Jewish ceremonies. The Israelites probably took the shofar from the Assyrians, since shofar comes from the Assyrian word for "wild goat" (Sendrey 1969:343). The shofar received its name because it is made from a ram's horn or an antelope horn with the narrow end flattened for a gold or silver mouthpiece. The shofar is mentioned more times in the Bible than any other Israelite instrument.

The shofar was used extensively in Israel's religion and military. Religiously the shofar was important to Israelites in connection to Rosh Hashanah (“Head of the Year” or New Year’s Day), and other important events. The curved shofar with the silver-covered mouth piece was blown for Rosh Hashanah. This shofar was considered to be the “male” shofar. Two straight (“female”) shofars with golden mouthpieces were to be blown for fast days (Polin 1954:64-5). The shofar was used by the major and minor prophets to evoke apocalyptic images in the Bible because of its military uses. In battle, the shofar was used as a signal to assemble the troops, attack the enemy, pursue defeated armies, and announce victory (Sendrey 1969:361).

In many of its functions the shofar is linked to the “hazozerot,” which is the special pair of silver trumpets. Religiously and militarily, they were used in conjunction with the shofar. The occasions originally set down for blowing the “hazozerot” included: gathering the people to the tent of meeting; to sound the call for the camps to go

forward; to invite the elders for gatherings; to alert the camp of danger; and to signal during warfare. The Bible mentions the “hazozerot” twenty-nine times.

One last wind instrument, though it is not a reed instrument or a horn, should be briefly mentioned here. At Tell Beit Mirsim, archaeologists found a small whistle, or “shrika,” from the early Iron Age. Although it does not appear to play a large role in the culture of ancient Israel, it is significant archaeologically that an intact example of a “shrike” was found. What appear to be whistles are fairly common on the antiquities market and several are in museums and in collections (Sendrey 1969:361).

4.12.2.3 String Instruments

Of all the instruments in ancient Israel, the stringed instruments were by far the most important to the ancient Israelites. The two different stringed instruments that the Bible mentions are the “kinnor” and the “nebel.” There are many depictions of string instruments used by ancient Jews in their daily life.

The “nebel” was a bulky, but mobile, instrument that was very similar to a harp. There were probably several variations of the “nebel,” especially in regards to the number of strings on the instrument. The nebel had anywhere from four to ten strings, as disclosed from the headings of some of the Psalms. The nebel was, "plucked with the fingers or plectrum, the word zamar (to pluck) is used in connection with this, while the word nigen (to play) refers to the kinnor" Polin 1954:69). In an Assyrian relief, Semitic captives (possibly Israelites) are shown with harps that appear to be nebels. In spite of the significance of

the nebel in Israel’s culture, it falls second in importance to the kinnor.

The kinnor is conspicuous among the instruments, not only because it was one of the first two instruments that Jubal contrived, but also because the kinnor was the instrument of King David. We are fortunate to have an authentic depiction of a kinnor on the tomb of Chnumotep, the Prince of Middle Egypt at Beni Hassan in the time of Pharaoh Usurtesen II of the 12th dynasty, which cannot be placed later than 2300 BCE. In the picture, Chnumotep is leading a procession of Semites to Pharaoh, and in that procession is a man carrying an instrument that is unmistakably a kinnor. The kinnor is similar to the lyre, while the nebel bears a closer resemblance to a harp. The kinnor, like the tof, is exclusively associated with joyful occasions. David’s laments for Saul and Jonathan, for Abner, for Amnon and Absalom are apparently not accompanied by any instruments. "The kinnor becomes silent when the joy ceases" (Sendrey 1969:276). The general shape of the kinnor is well represented by the shape of Lake Kinneret, more popularly known among English speakers as the Sea of Galilee.

4.12.3 Concluding Comments on Music

Music was very important to the people of ancient Israel and neighboring lands during the Iron Age and during the periods before and after this time. It played a role in most aspects of the peoples’ lives and we have been able to learn much about them because of the archaeological findings of musical instruments and artistic representations of musical instruments in the Iron Age and other relevant times.

The shofar was used extensively in Israel's religion and military. Another important instrument of the people was the nebel. It was very similar to a harp (kinnor) and had anywhere from four to ten strings, as disclosed from the headings of some of the Psalms. In an Assyrian relief, Semitic captives (Israelites) are shown with harps that appear to be nebels. In other excavated sites in Israel and Judah, figurines were found that illustrated the use of musical instruments in the Iron II period.

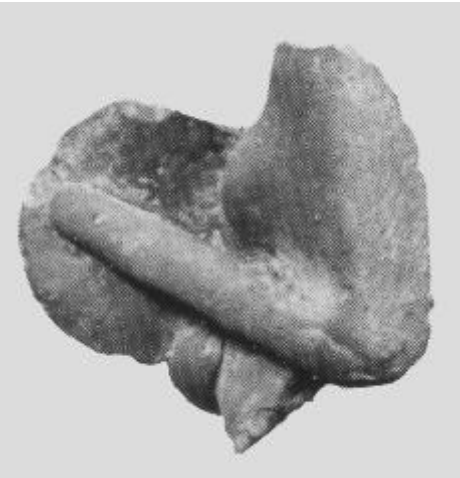
a. An Assyrian Cymbalist

b. Rattles (Beit Shemesh) Iron Age

Rattles: Heavy clay rattles occur in some Iron II contexts. Due to their large size, it is doubtful that these hour-glass shaped instruments could function as rattles for infants. They probably were used in musical processions (2 Samuel 6:5). As for other musical instruments, most have not survived except in depiction.

Figure 4.12-1

a. Pottery figurine of a woman playing a flute.
Achziv, Iron Age II.



b. Pottery Figurine of a woman playing a tambourine.
Sarepta Shrine I

Figure 4.12-2

4.13 JEWELRY AND ART

4.13.1 Introduction: Jewelry

Lotus-seed carnelian beads and lunate earrings, typical forms of the Late Bronze II period, occurred in the Iron I. These were especially found in Tombs 7 and 66 at Beth-Shean. Some of the more common types of amulets are the Ptah Sokar, Uraeus, and Bes. Scarabs remained the typical signet item of Iron I, though, stamp seals, which were to become a dominant form in Iron II, begin to appear in burials. These were found at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh tomb 118 and Baq'ah Valley Cave A 4. Gold foil fragments are thought to have been used either to seal the lips of the deceased or to be sown into headdress (Abercrombie 1999c:15). See Figure 4.13-1.

The lunate shaped earrings of the Late Bronze and Iron I continued, but underwent transformation in Iron II. A tab or tassel is added to the earring in the first half of Iron II (Farah S 200 cemetery, Baq'ah Cave 4). The tassel or tab becomes longer and longer, and the earring itself becomes thicker and heavier, thus reflecting more the general jewelry style of Assyria (Abercrombie 1999c:15).

Bone pendants, the most common being long cylinders or miniature mallets, are commonly found in tenth through seventh century BCE remains. The pendants have a hole at one end and may be decorated with circular ring designs or incised lines. Such pendants have been found at a number of sites in ancient Israel/Judah. Two of these included Gibeon (tomb 3) and Beth Shemesh Stratum II. See Figure 4.13-2.

How the pendants were worn is debated. W. F. Albright suggested that they were earrings, though there is much difficulty in determining how they would be fastened to the ear (Albright, Tell Beit Mirsim, III, 81). Other people

have concluded that they were worn individually as part of a bead necklace.

Scarabs continued to be used as amulets, by late Iron II, however, the number and types of amulets decreased dramatically throughout most of the region with the exception of sites on the immediate coast. Most common types of scarabs are decorated with animals (lion, fish, horse, and scorpion) or with good luck expressions (usually Egyptian symbols for life, prosperity or health). Some had pharaonic names, even the names of kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Scaraboids, scarab-like seals, appear more frequently (Mazar 1990: 506-507) (Abercrombie 1999c:15).

Bangles with overlapping ends became more common than the open-end forms of the Late Bronze Age. Earlier Iron I-II bangles tend to be more slender and tapered than bangles dated to the end of Iron II. An example of bronze bangles was found in Tomb 3 in the excavation at Gibeon (Abercrombie 1999c:17).

4.13.2 Jewelry and Metal

Metals were especially sought after for the making of jewelry. The metals used could have a smooth surface which allowed some of them to be of a reflective type. Metals were usually reflective which enhanced their beauty when affixed with precious or semi-precious stones. The materials most often used were precious metals, like gold and silver, and base metals, like copper, bronze, iron and lead.

Three main techniques were used in producing and shaping metal jewelry. These three were: cold hammering,

annealing (heating and then hammering), and casting into an open-mold.

Very early, steel bracelets or anklets were found in a 12th century BCE burial in the Baq'ah Valley in Jordan. Made as an alloy of iron and carbon, steel is hard, strong and very workable when heated sufficiently. New metallurgical techniques were developed because of the desire for jewelry in the ancient world. But, overall there was relatively little use of elaborate decorative techniques, such as granulation and filigree.

Precious gems and semi-precious stones were placed into some metal jewelry. Glass, faience, and frit were used in making beads and pendants (Abercrombie 1999c:18).

4.13.3 Glass

The University of Pennsylvania Museum has an excellent summary of the manufacture and use of glass. This summary is now presented with the kind permission of the Museum. It states:

> Glass is made from silica (e.g. sand) that has been melted and cooled without recrystalization. Faience has a fused crystalline body and a thin glaze coating (normally a distinctive turquoise blue). Faience-glazed pendants were extremely popular in Egypt as good-luck talismans and protection against evils. Frit is like unglazed faience; often it was produced as a colorant, especially in glass. Throughout the Near East before the Early Bronze Age, faience and frit already were produced. Glass was produced sporadically and perhaps accidentally, until the Middle Bronze Age (ca 1800 BCE) when specialized production began in Northern Mesopotamia.
>
> As the technology to create blown glass had not yet been invented, glass objects were created method called core-forming, which was practiced by the

> Phoenicians. Core-forming, originally developed by the Egyptians, was used for the production of glass beads and various other glass objects. In core-forming, a core of clay is shaped around a metal rod. Semi-molten glass is then wound around the core in "trails," often of a variety of colors, which were added, until the object was sufficiently built up. The soft glass could be inscribed with a sharp tool to create decorative patterns. Once the glass object was finished, the clay core was scraped. (Abercrombie 1999c:1-3).

4.13.4 Metal Fasteners for Clothes

The toggle pin was a Bronze Age fastener that disappeared by the Iron Age II. It was replaced by an item known as the fibula or safety pin. The bow was the primary shape of the fibulas. They varied in size and decorations. They were basically made from bronze or iron (Stronach 1959:181-206). See Figure 4.13-3.

4.13.5 Art in Israel and Judah

There are very few classes of art objects which can be considered genuine Israelite works. Whereas in northern Syria monumental sculpture and wall reliefs were common in Iron Age public buildings, almost the only evidence of such art discovered in Israel are the Proto-Aeolic capitals and carved window balustrades which are part of the ashlar masonry tradition. Works of sculpture are a limestone statue of a crouching lion from Tell Beit Mirsim and two reliefs of lion heads found in a burial cave at Tel Eitun (both in the Shephelah of Judah). The only other original Israelite artworks were all miniatures: seal engravings, pottery figurines, cult stands decorated in relief, and some paintings on pottery (from Kuntillet’ Ajrud). Other artifacts were imported from Phoenician and Aramean production centers; they included carved ivories, stone

cosmetic bowls, metal bowls, and engraved tridacna clam shells (Mazar 1990:502).

4.13.6 The Samaria Ivories

“The main group of ivories from Israel, including over two hundred pieces, was discovered in the royal acropolis at Samaria. The majority were uncovered in a building which may be identified with the "ivory building" erected by Ahab (1 Kings 22:39). (Mazar 1990:503).

The Samaria pieces belong to the Phoenician ivory-carving school, known from such sites as Salamis in Cyprus, Arslan Tash in Syria, and Nimrud in Assyria, where elaborate works of this school were brought as booty (Barnett 1982:43-55).

Most of the ivories were small plaques intended to decorate furniture, such as the "ivory beds" mentioned by Amos (6:4). Practically all the techniques of Phoenician ivory carving are represented. Plaques carved in low relief were ornamented with inlays of polychrome glass, paste, gold foil, and lapis lazuli (a precious blue stone imported from Afghanistan).

In several cases, these different materials were separated from another by narrow partitions, a technique known as "cloisonne." The majority of the motifs in this group are Egyptian, including gods and mythological scenes. See Figure 4-13-4.

There are also plaques made in high relief, others made in open work (ajour), and still others sculpture in the round. The themes featured in the last two types include stylized plants (such as the palmette, the voluted "tree of life," and rosettes), a sphinx nursing a calf, two antithetical lions, and the "woman in the window" (a

woman's head in a window, with a balustrade similar to that found in the palace of Ramat Rahel). See Figures 4.13-5.

The Samaria ivories must have been produced during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. A more exact date cannot be determined, although various suggestions have been made. It is tempting to think that they were brought to Samaria from Phoenicia during the time of Ahab and his wife, the Tyrian princess Jezebel. She was reportedly significantly instrumental in popularizing Phoenician cult practices in the Israelite capital. If this was the case, most of the ivories should be dated to the first half of the ninth century BCE (Mazar 1985:40-53).

Phoenician ivories from this time are also known from the palace of Shalmaneser III at Nimrud. There is also an ivory from Arslan Tash, ancient Hadatu, (see sites of Syria) that is inscribed with the name of Hazael, who was king of Aram in the late ninth century BCE.

No ivories have been discovered in Judah, but their existence may be assumed due to Sennacherib's reference to ivory tribute presented to him by Hezekiah.

“The influence of Phoenicia on local Israelite art can also be discerned in the painted motifs on pottery jars from Kuntillet Ajrud motifs imitating those on Phoenician ivories” (Mazar 1990:505).

4.13.7 Figurines

Plaques and clay figurines resembling the asherah were found in a number of sites in Israel/Judah and are discussed in Chapter 4.6 titled Temples, Gods, and Cults.

Some examples of figurines that were found in excavations included: the pottery heads of women, located at Beth Shemesh, Stratum II and a bell-shaped figurine holding a bird, from Sarepta Shrine I. The asherah were sometimes made in two parts and molds were found for the heads and bodies.

Miniature pottery forms of animals, animals with people, and furniture were occasionally found at a few sites such as Lachish and Beth Shemesh. These figurines were sometimes used in cultic rituals, as charms, or as toys for children. See Figures 4.13-6 and 4.13-7a.

4.13.8 Cylinder Seals

Cylinder seals contained two dominate motifs of this period. These were the sacred tree with animals and the second motif showed a seated individual before a table being served by an animal or human.

4.13.9 Cosmetic Stone Palettes and Flat Bowls

A few cosmetic stone palettes and flat bowls from Iron Age II were discovered in a small number of excavations in ancient Israel/Judah. See Figure 4.13-7 which shows a cosmetic palette with incised design discovered in a house located in Gibeon Area 17. There have been some found with blue makeup residue remaining in incised decorations.

4.13.10 Alabaster and Related Stone Vases

There was a number of alabaster vessels found in the Late Bronze and Iron I periods. The dominate forms, were pyxis and tazza. The number of these decreased in Iron II.

Local manufactures developed these forms plus cups and goblets out of pottery which was cheaper and more available. The imports from Egypt greatly declined (Amiran 1969:187).

4.13.11 Faience

Faience is a non-clay ceramic substance composed of crushed quartz, lime and alkali. Combined with water it can be hand molded or pressed into a mold. Upon heating, a reflective, vitreous glaze forms on the surface. Faience was frequently utilised for amulets, jewellery and decorative architectural elements, such as tiles.

The most common type of faiene vessels found in ancient Israel and Judah were small cups or chalices, often Egyptian in shape. There was little change in these types from Late Bronze II to Iron I. By Iron II the types of faience decreased. Examples showing faience ware of the Iron Age were found at Tel Qasile (Mazar 1985:14-16).

4.13.12 Concluding Comments on Jewelry and Art

The Israelites developed the craft of jewelry making and engraving ivory which was carved and used for inlay (1 Kings 10:22; 22:39; Amos 3:15). This was attested to from the discovery of the Samaria ivories which were dated to the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. The influence of Phoenicia on local Israelite art can also be discerned in the painted motifs on pottery jars from Kuntillet Ajrud motifs imitating those on Phoenician ivories.

Some examples of figurines that were found in excavations included: the pottery heads of women; a bell-shaped figurine holding a bird and the mass produced

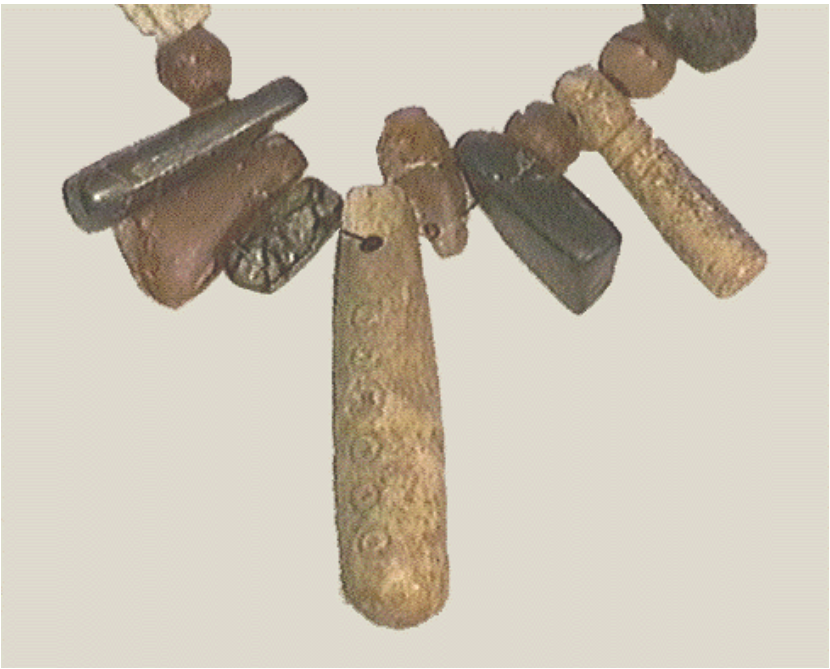
asherah idols which were sometimes made in two parts and molds were found for the heads and bodies.

Occasionally found at a few sites were miniature pottery forms of animals, people with animals and furniture. These figurines were sometimes used in cultic rituals, as charms, or as toys for children. At Megiddo a jasper seal was found. The inscription on the seal translated as “Shema, servant of Jeroboam” which was identified with Jeroboam II. The lifelike and magnificently executed lion, which appears on it, furnishes evidence of the flourishing art in this era.

a . Jewelry from North Cemetery Beth Shan (Iron I) b. Ring:Gibeon Tomb

c. Uraeus Amulet d. Wadjet eye e. Ptah Sokar, Bes

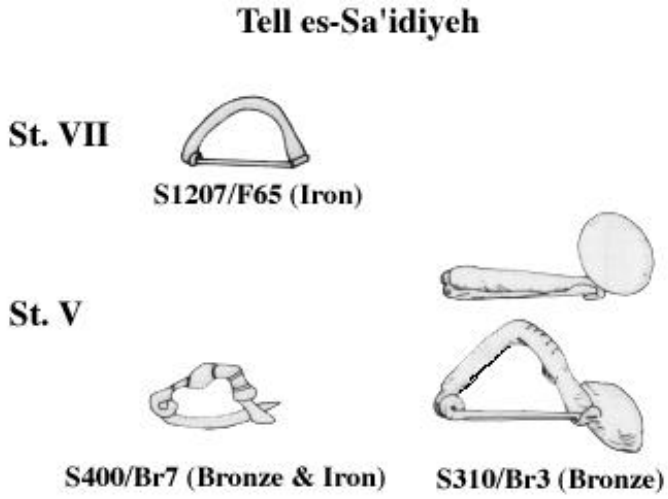
Figure 4.13-1



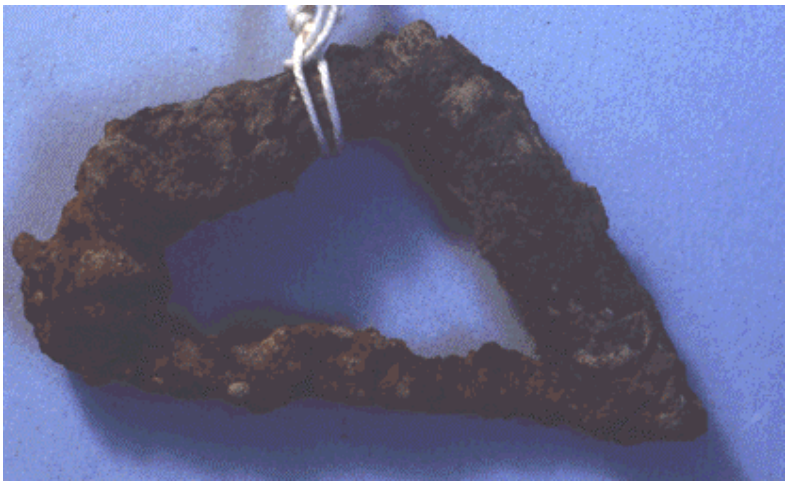
a. Iron Age II Incised bone pendants (Gibeon Tomb 3)

b. Undecorated bone pendants (Beth Shemesh Stratum II). Iron II

Figure 4.13-2



a. Diagram of Fibulas found at Tell es-Sa’idiyeh(Sa’idiyeh, Statum V) showing the triangular bow type



b. Bronze Fibula with triangular bow, Type III from Beth Shemesh Stratum II

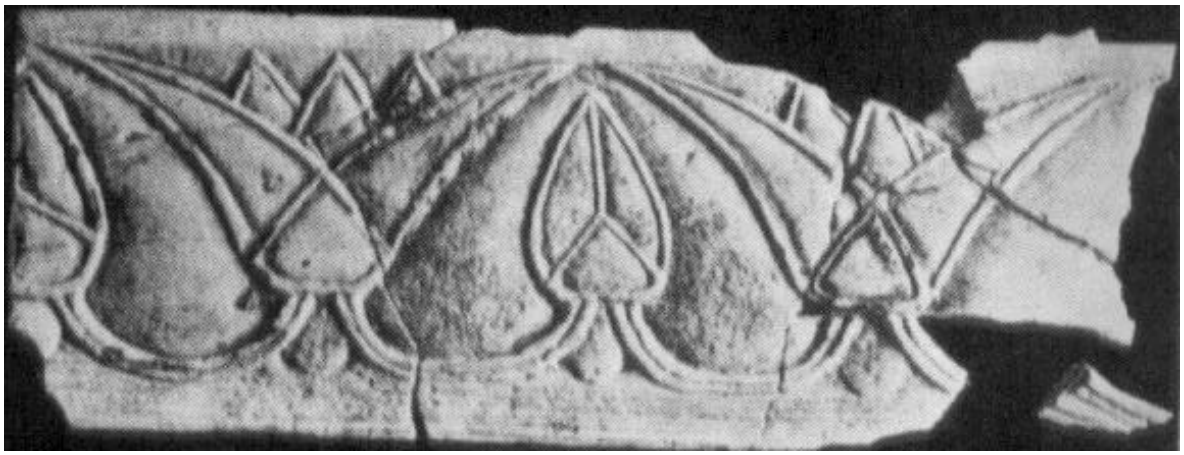
Figure 4.13-3

a. Griffin (Sphinx) Samarian Ivory Iron II

b. Egyptian motif Ivory from Samaria

Figure 4.13-4

a. Ivory fragment of a Phoenician Woman. Iron II from Sarepta (Zarephath) located between Tyre and Sidon



b. Samarian Ivory showing Lotus inlay Iron II

Figure 4.13-5

a. Molded head of a woman from Beth Shemesh Stratum II

b. Horse with rider (partially broken). Beth Shemesh Stratum II

Figure 4-13-6

a. Bell-shaped woman figurine holding a bird. Sarepta Shrine I

b. Cosmetic palette with incised design from Gibeon Houses in area 17 Iron II

Figure 4.13-7

4.14 BURIAL

4.14.1 Introduction

The following abstract from Raz Kletter gives a good introduction to the subject of burials in the Iron Age. The writer of this dissertation agrees with the views expressed by Raz Kletter.

> Despite many years of excavations and surveys in Palestine's central highlands, very few Iron I burials are known, as opposed to many rich cemeteries from the LB and Iron II periods. Most scholars have ignored this phenomenon. However, it is meaningful and cannot be explained on grounds of randomness of research or low population density. Some burials, like Dothan cave I, are Iron Age I chronologically, but culturally belong to the LB world. We have practically no burials from the hundreds of highland settlements which have been found (and excavated) by Mazar, Zertal, Finkelstein and others. It is unlikely that the new settlers did not bury their dead (cf. the stress of later biblical sources about burial). Also, abandonment of the dead is usually restricted to specific segments in a society, such as poor or newborns, not to all the dead. The lack

> of burials can be cautiously related with social structure, namely, a relatively poor and “egalitarian” society. It also marks a clear break from the former LB culture, despite the recent tendency to see the Iron I as a completely internal development. When coming to learn about the identity of the new settlers, however, we are at a loss. Archaeology, in my view, cannot indicate ethnicity if historical sources are lacking, especially “inner” sources. Following Anthony Smith, Iron I Israelites were an “ethnic category,” but not necessarily an “ethnic community.” (Kletter: 2002).

4.14.2 BURIAL CUSTOMS

The custom of burying in family burial caves was inherited by the Israelites from the Canaanites. The Canaanites apparently received their later ideas from the Philistines who brought their practices along from the Aegean areas. The Canaanite Bronze Age caves were mostly amorphic. But, later a deliberate shaping of rock-hewn tombs was found in Israel and particularly in Judah. The most common type included a square room entered through a small square opening which could be closed by a large stone. Rock-cut benches on three sides of the chamber provided space for three bodies. More elaborate examples had an additional rear chamber. In several cases at Jerusalem, Gibeon, and Khirbet el-Kom, “headrests” were shaped on the benches in the form of a horseshoe or an Omega curling “Hathor headdress.” Such an Omega shaped head holder would tend to keep a skull from rolling away from the body during earthquakes. The bones and gifts were collected from the benches into a special repository which was a sunken pit or a small side chamber on the side of the tomb. This was done to clear space for more burials (Aharoni 1979a:238).

The origin of these burial caves can be traced to the benched chamber tombs known at Tell el-Far'ah (south) and others that dated to the beginning of the Iron Age. A number of these tombs contained Philistine offerings. The deceased were found in the supine fully extended position with hands at their sides. Children and infants generally were placed in a fetal position and may also be deposited in storage jars. This type of burial style continued into Iron II as was evident from Tell el-Far’ah (south) and tombs from Zeror. However, in spite of the similarity between these chamber tombs and the caves of Judah, their relationship is unclear. The earliest Judean examples seem to have appeared only in the ninth century BCE. From then on, this form predominated (Mazar 1990:520-521).

In some of the richer primary burials, the bodies were placed in anthropoid coffins. Such coffin burials continued through the Iron Age I and II. These coffins were found at a number of sites including Beth Shan Tombs 7 and 66, and Tell el-Farah (S) 500. These grotesque coffin burials are identified as being Philistine burials. See Figure 4.14-1a. In Iron II, the known anthropoid coffin burials occur almost exclusively in the Transjordan at Dhiban, Sahab and Amman. Khair Yassine has written details about these burials (Yassine 1988). See Figure 4.14-1b.

4.14.3 Burials in and around Jerusalem

The cemeteries of Jerusalem were found scattered around the city, and each has its own characteristics. The most elaborate tombs were identified in the area of the St. Etienne monastery, north of the Damascus Gate. Two exceptionally large and elaborate caves there included a large central hall surrounded by several rectangular

benched rooms. Architectural details in these caves, such as the cornices along the upper edges of the walls in the central hall, recall royal burial caves in the kingdom of Urartu in Anatolia. The burial rooms in the caves consisted usually of three benches, each with special headrests cut from the rock and repositories for collecting the bones. The headrests are typical of the Jerusalem cemeteries and are found in most of them, while outside Jerusalem they are rarely found. In one of the St. Etienne caves there was an inner room with rock-cut tub-shaped burial places which may have been used for important leaders of the families to which the caves belong. These would be people whose bones were never collected for secondary burial.

Many additional burial caves were discovered on the slopes of the Hinnom Valley. These are closer to the city than are the common Iron Age burial caves in Judah. Some of them, particularly those discovered by G. Barkay on the site known as "Ketef Hinnom" [“shoulder of the Hinnom” Valley] (near St. Andrew's church), are large and elaborate. The location of these two cemeteries reflects the expansion of the city to the Western Hill in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (Mazar 1990:522).

An exceptional Iron Age cemetery was found in the Silwan village, across the Kidron valley opposite the City of David. It consisted of elaborate tombs hewn into architectural shapes from the cliffs. Some of the tombs are freestanding monolithic chambers decorated with Egyptian cornices which probably carried a pyramidal built-up or hewn roof. These monolithic tombs probably belonged to important personalities in Jerusalem, such as Shebna who was "over the house." His burial monument in Jerusalem enraged Isaiah (Isaiah 22:15-16). Other tombs in Silwan are

smaller, they include a small cave chamber with a gabled roof and a side room with a sunken area intended for the burial of one or two bodies. The form of these tombs is foreign to Judah and was probably inspired by Phoenician prototypes. See Figures 4.14-2, 3, and 4. Iron Age tombs were also found in other areas of Judah such as at Tel Ira and in the Shephelah, they were uncovered at Beth-Shemesh. See Figure 4.14-5.

Additional caves which appear to have been rock-cut tombs were those discovered on the west slope of the Tyropoeon Valley near the southwest corner of the Temple Mount. They must date to the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, prior to the expansion of the city to the Western Hill (Mazar 1990:525-526). Their form expresses Phoenician influence in Jerusalem. In the rest of Judah there was one dominant type of burial chamber. During the four hundred years Jerusalem was the capital of Judah, a variety of forms, heterogeneous population, social hierarchy, and foreign influence affected burial practices in the city.

The seal of the deceased individual was sometimes placed in his tomb together with various weapons, jewelry, and other objects. The finds from the Ketef Hinnom caves exemplify the profusion of the deposits in this period. One repository, containing the remains of almost a hundred deceased, had 263 complete vessels, in addition to elaborate jewelry, weapons, and such artifacts as two inscribed silver talisman or amulets, subsequently called plaques. Dr. G. Barkay in personal discussions with this writer (in 1990 and in the mid-1990’s) has indicated his desire that these silver artifacts not be called talisman or amulets. Those indicated superstition, but he preferred the more neutral term “plaque.” The larger of the two

plaques measures 97 x 27 mm, the smaller only 39 x 11 mm. The larger plaque contains 18 lines of mostly legible writing. Both plaques contain benediction formulas in paleo-Hebrew script, almost identical to the biblical Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6:24-26.

In the above finding, the biblical text, dated to the 6th century BCE, is the oldest known to date. This is also the most ancient inscription of the name “YHWH” (Yahweh, the name of the LORD in Hebrew) to ever yet be found. The benediction quoted from the Book of Numbers was recited by the Temple priests when blessing the congregation; here it is found in writing and for individual use. The tiny silver scrolls were probably worn as amulets around the neck. This excavation was directed by G. Barkay on behalf of Tel Aviv University (Mazar 1990:524) and (Barkay 1986:34-35).

4.14.4 Burials at Khirbet el-Qom

In 1967, archaeologist W. G. Dever conducted a salvage operation at Khirbet el-Qom, a site in the Judean hills about eight miles west of Hebron in the general vicinity of Lachish and Tell Beit Mirsim. A tomb containing pottery and inscriptions from the time of the Judean monarchy had recently been opened at the site, and Dever wanted to examine the material before any chance of looting occurred. When he came to the site, he found the tomb was already partially robbed. It consisted of a central room with four burial chambers on the eastern wall. It became evident that an inscription had been removed from a pillar that was between two of the burial loci. Dever and the officials working with him were able to recover it from the nearby village before it could be sold into the antiquities market. The inscription, written in Hebrew, indicated that

one of the burial chambers had belonged to a man named Uriah, upon whom it invokes the blessing of Yahweh. Further information about the inscriptions from El Qom is found in the section on Hebrew writing under Literacy and Inscriptions in chapter 4, number 4.5.7.8.

4.14.5 Cremation Burials

Cremation burial, unknown in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, appears in Iron I and continues into Iron II. The earliest form of cremation burial, urn burial such as those found at Azor occurs almost exclusively in the coastal region of southern Judah. It is interesting to note that only two examples predate the 10th century BCE. In the tenth-eighth century BCE, these urn burials (er-Reqeish, 200 cemetery Tell el-Farad S) show striking similarity to contemporary burials in the Phoenician colonies of northern Africa. By late Iron II, it appears that cremation urn burials may be replaced by cremation pyre burials, though there is minimal evidence to confirm this observation. One of the excavations that produced this evidence was found at Atlit about 20 km to the south of Haifa. The ancient site spreads on a rocky island, on an area of 700 acres. It is bordered on the west by the sea, on the east by the kurkar ridge, and to the north is the Oren River outlet. Land excavations carried out by C. N. Johns, in the 1930's revealed a series of rock-cut shaft tombs and cremation burials along the SE part of the kurkar (sandstone) ridge. The burial and the settlement on the north coast were dated to the periods between the 9th and the 5th centuries BCE (Johns 1993:114).

4.14.6 Concluding Comments on Burial

In the Iron Age wealthy persons or families often had their own underground tombs dug into the slopes of the hills. Archaeologists have often found at various sites courtyard entrances which led to inner chambers. The sides of many of these chambers were lined with shelves cut out of the rock. Excavations also indicated that the burials of poorer people usually took place in a small area of land in the vicinity of a city.

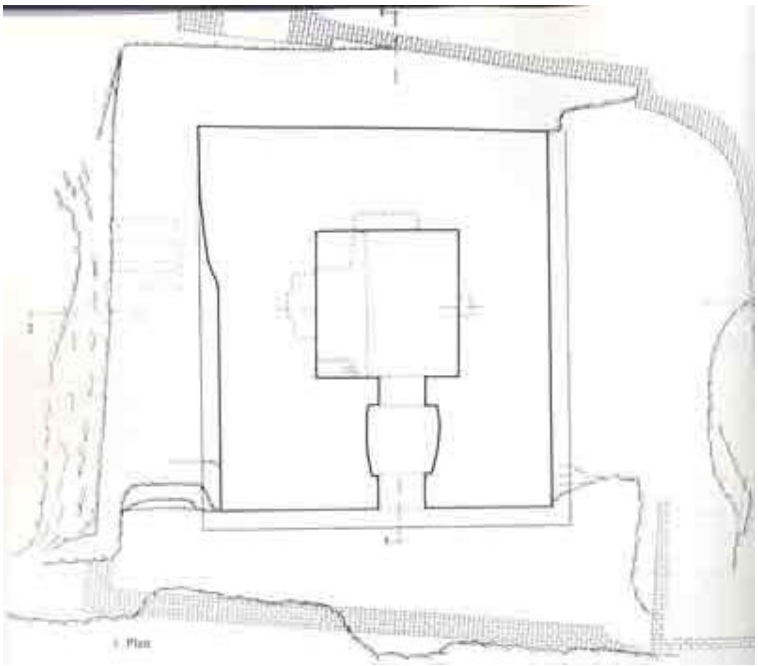
An exceptional Iron Age cemetery was found in the Silwan village east of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley opposite the City of David. It consisted of elaborate tombs hewn into architectural shapes from the cliffs. These monolithic tombs probably belonged to important personalities in Jerusalem, such as Shebna who was "over the house." His burial monument in Jerusalem enraged Isaiah (Isaiah 22:15-16). Other tombs in Silwan are smaller. The forms of some of these tombs were foreign to Judah and were probably inspired by Phoenician prototypes. Iron Age tombs were also found in other sites of Israel and Judah. The findings of these tombs helped to bring more understanding of the families in regards to their respect for the dead and their need to preserve the memories of significant people.

a. Anthropoid coffin face from Beth Shan

b. Anthropoid Coffin Iron II from Deir el-Balah in Jordan.

Figure 4.14-1

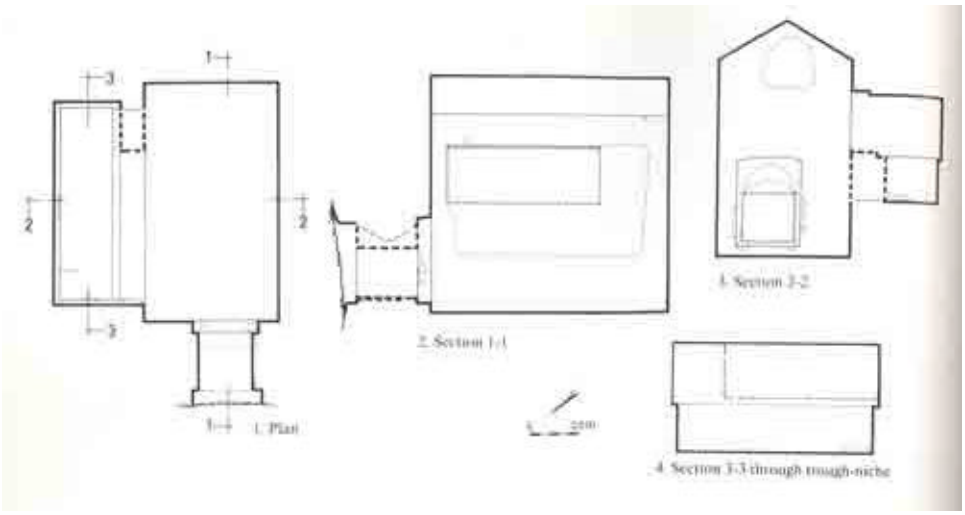
Figure 4.14-2 The Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom in the Village of Silwan, Jerusalem.



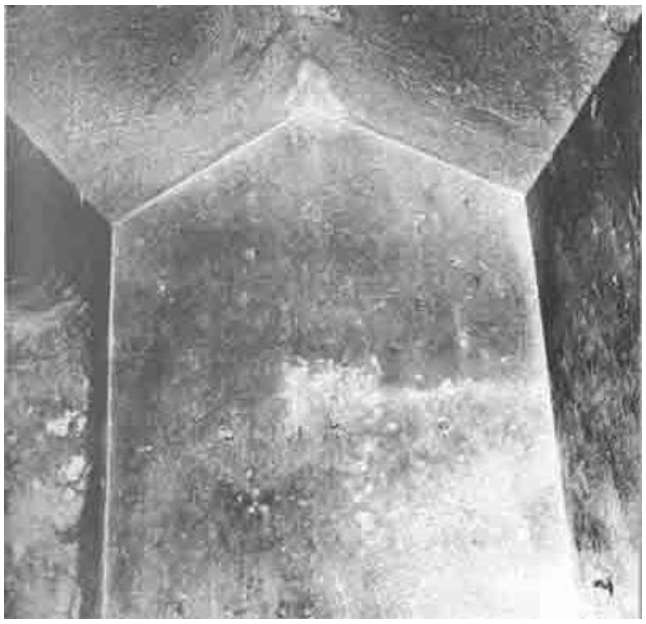
a. Plan of the “Tomb of the Pharaoh’s Daughter” in the Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom in the Village of Silwan, beside Jerusalem

b. “Tomb of the Pharaoh’s Daughter” in the Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom in the Village of Silwan beside Jerusalem

Figure 4.14-3

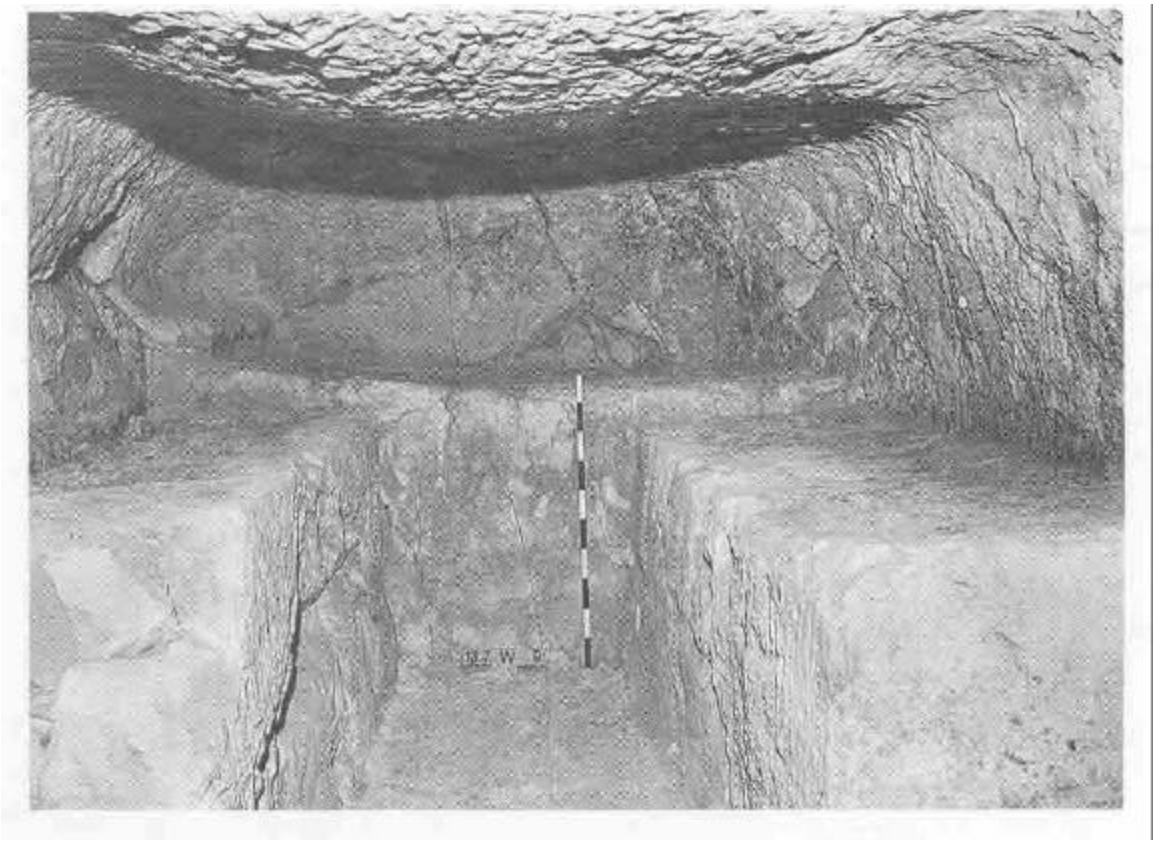


a. Plan of Tomb 9, in the Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom, in the Village of Silwan beside Jerusalem



b. Gabled Ceiling of Tomb 9 in the Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom. The Village of Silwan beside Jerusalem

Figure 4.14-4



Tomb Interior at Tel 'Ira, a stronghold in the Biblical Negev, Tomb 9.

Figure 4.14-5