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Typical and Atypical Burial in the Late Hellenistic–Early Roman Periods at Horvat Ashun – Modi'in Hills

Avraham S. Tendler, Shulamit Terem and Vered Eshed

Abstract

Seven tombs from the Second Temple period were excavated in the immediate vicinity of Horvat Ashun, a rural settlement from the Early Hellenistic–Late Roman periods in the Modi'in hills. Three of the tombs were small caves without kokhim; the other four had kokhim. Two of the tombs were discovered sealed. Most of the skeletons discovered were multiple primary burials side by side or one on top of the other within the kokhim or small caves. No ossuaries were found. It seems that the residents of the site did not practice systematic secondary burial. The tombs are presented together with the human skeletal remains and ceramic finds. The caves that were found sealed allow for a well-grounded reconstruction of the burial customs practiced within them. The paper demonstrates how, although there seem to have been typical forms of burial during the Second Temple period, these were not rigid practices or religious customs. Rather, a variety of burial practices existed side by side.

The excavations at Horvat Ashun (ITM 198550/645701) uncovered the majority of a rural settlement, with strata from the Early Hellenistic period to the Late Roman period (Tendler & Elisha 2017).¹ The relevant strata are described below.

*** Dedicated to the dear memory of Professor Amos Kloner**

- ¹ The salvage excavations (A7484/2015, A7647/2016) were directed by Avraham S. Tendler on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Four tombs were excavated and three surveyed. The variation in the level of archaeological work in each tomb is a result of the complexity of excavating burial caves in Israel. The ceramics were analyzed by Shulamit Terem and the physical anthropology by Vered Eshed. Assistance in excavation of the tombs presented in this paper was provided by Yossi Elisha, Israel Korenfeld, Jenny Marcus, Durrar Maswara, Shahar Krispin and Omri Danziger (field directors), Assaf Peretz (photography), Mendel Kahan, Avi Hajian and Roi Liron (surveying and drafting), Anjelina Dagot (mapping and GIS), The National Laboratory for Digital Documentation and Research, IAA, and Marina Shuiskaya (pottery drawings), Clara Amit (studio photography) and Tal Rogovsky (assistance in preparation of ceramic plates). The use of all the figures is by courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The research was partially supported by a Hanan Eshel prize for excellence granted by the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center for Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University; we thank the Center. We wish to thank Boaz Zissu and Dvir Raviv for enlightening discussions of the subject.

In the 3rd–early 2nd centuries BCE a small farmstead was established at the site. During the mid 2nd century B.C.E. a new, larger, protected farmstead was established. It consisted of a spacious farmhouse with massive external walls and numerous courtyards at the summit and an industrial area on the northern shoulder of the hill. The industrial area included two buildings, an olive press, an industrial winepress, a ritual bath and cisterns. In the late 1st century BCE and 1st century CE the farmstead underwent changes. A wing of rooms was added to the farmhouse and part of the industrial area fell into disuse. During the Middle Roman period, between the revolts, the farmstead continued to flourish. In the early 2nd century CE, probably shortly before the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE), the farmhouse was fortified and hiding complexes were hewn. As a result of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, the fortified farmstead was abandoned.

The identification of the farmstead's inhabitants as Jewish is based on historical-geographical considerations as well as archaeological finds. The Modi'in hill region was annexed to Judea administratively from 145 BCE, and there is substantial evidence that it was settled by Jews prior to that time (Raviv 2019). The residents of the farmstead installed *mikva'ot* (ritual baths) and used chalk stone vessels. Most of the numismatic finds consisted of Hasmonean coins, First Revolt coins and Bar-Kokhba Revolt coins.²

Seven burial caves from the Late Hellenistic–Middle Roman periods were found in the immediate vicinity of Horvat Ashun (fig. 1).³ The caves were hewn out of the Menuha chalk of the Mt. Scopus group of the Upper Cretaceous (Senonian) age (*Lod Map*). These caves and their physical-anthropological and ceramic finds will be described and discussed in this paper.⁴

Anthropological Methods

The anthropological methods used to determine the skeletal sex and age are as follows. Sex determination for adults was based on the following: morphology of skull and long bones (Bass 1987), morphology of innominate bones (Segebarth-Orban 1980; Bass 1987, 200–206) and vertical diameter of the femoral

2 Regional archaeological research by Boaz Zissu (2001, 38–50), Yehiel Zelinger (2009) and Dvir Raviv (2018, II, 7–14), has also shown that the region was primarily settled by Jews during this period.

3 An additional burial cave from the Late Roman period was excavated within the courtyard of the Late Roman period villa. For a preliminary publication of that cave, see Tendler & Klein 2017, 55–56.

4 More detailed anthropological and ceramic reports will be published in the final excavation report (Eshed forthcoming; Terem forthcoming).

and humerus heads (Bass 1987, 219, 251). Adulthood was defined as over 15 years of age. Ages were determined using the following criteria: metamorphosis of the auricular surface of the ilium (Lovejoy et al. 1985) and stages of tooth attrition (using standards modified from Lovejoy 1985; Hillson 1986), and the presence of osteophytes and arthritic lesions on the vertebrae (Nathan 1962). For young adults, i.e., 15 to 25 years old, the following additional criteria were used: closure of epiphyses on the long bones (Johnston & Zimmer 1989, fig. 62) and closure of the sternal ends of the clavicles (Szilvássy 1980). For the sub-adult class, under 15 years old, we used the following criteria: the length of long bones without the epiphyses (Bass 1987), stages of tooth eruption and development (Ubelaker 1989) and closure of the epiphyses of long bones (Johnston & Zimmer 1989).

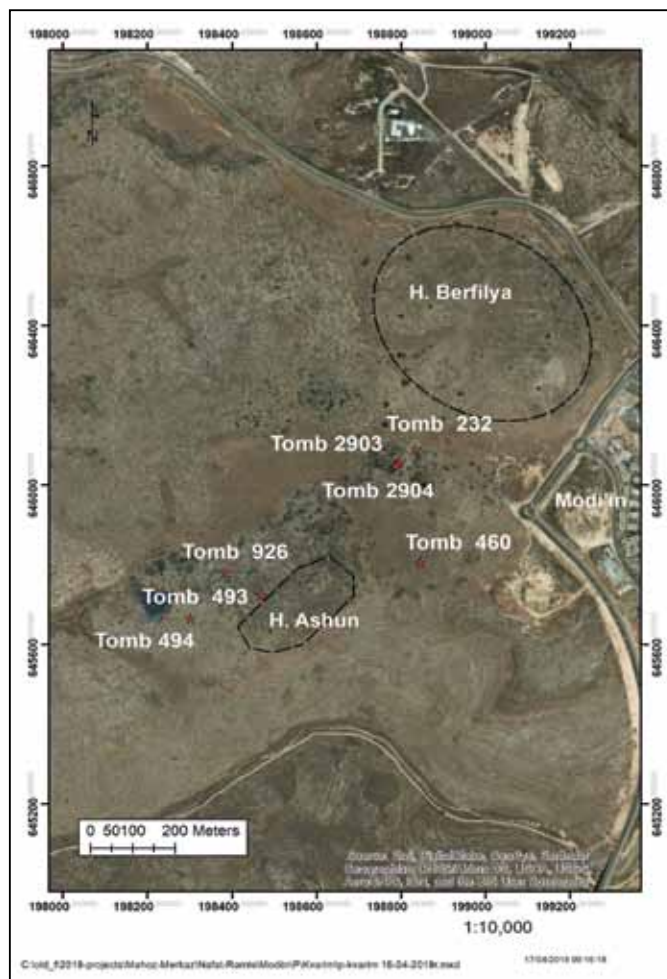


Figure 1: A map of Horvat Ashun, Horvat Berfilya and the tombs discussed in the paper

Tomb 460

Tomb 460 (ITM 198845/645806) was hewn out of a rock outcrop approximately 300 m east of the farmhouse at Horvat Ashun. The natural rock face above the small circular tomb entrance (0.6 m high) was chiseled smooth, creating an impressive façade 2.6 m high (figs. 2–3). The tomb was accessed via an oblong, stepped, rock-cut entranceway, measuring 1x2.6 m. The tomb entrance was originally sealed with a stone slab, which was found lying near the entrance. The tomb itself was a small oval cave (approximately 4.2 m² in area and 1.75 m high at its highest point; fig. 4). The burial in the cave was found disturbed adjacent to the southern wall of the cave. The skeletal remains consisted of two adults – one male and one female (see appendix A: 1–2). The ceramic finds in the cave consisted of three vessels: a jar, a cooking pot and a lamp (fig. 5).



Figure 2: The entrance to tomb 460



Figure 4: View inside tomb 460

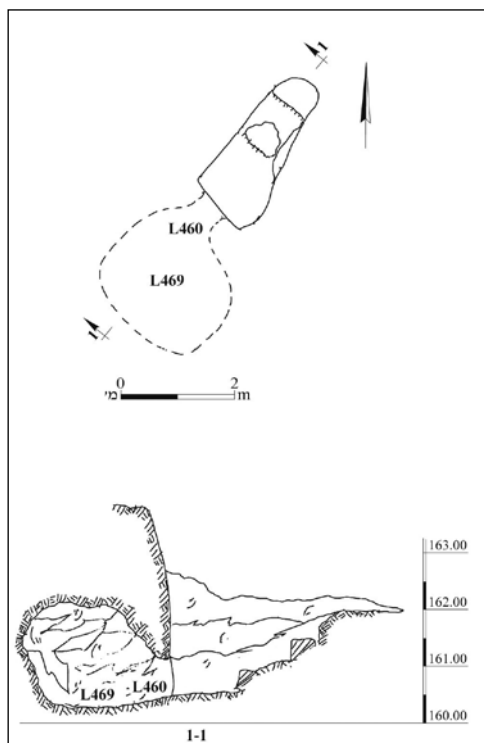


Figure 3: Plan and section of tomb 460

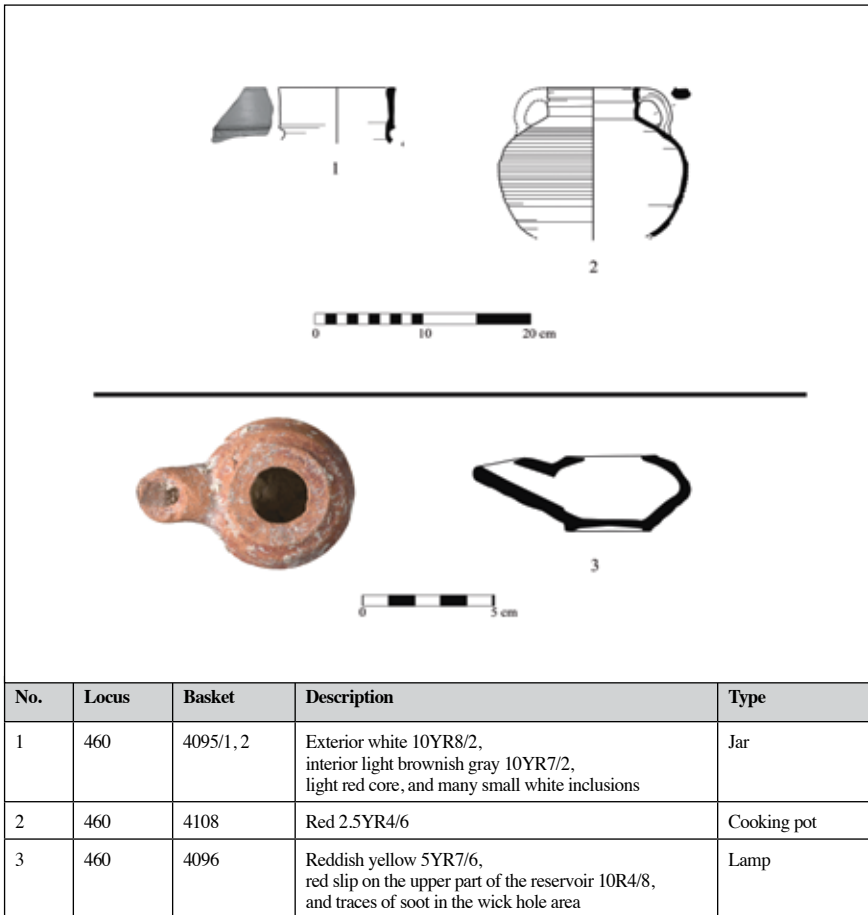


Figure 5: The pottery from tomb 460

Jar no. 1, of which only the rim was found, is characterized by a collared rim and, based on parallels, a cylindrical body. This type of jar is generally dated, at sites in Judea, to the Late Hellenistic/Hasmonean and Herodian periods (Bar-Nathan 2002, 28–31, type J-SJ4A3; Geva 2003, 124, and type SJ-3b). This subtype with a long collared rim was the most dominant type in Stratum 3 of the Jewish Quarter excavations in Jerusalem dating to the second half of the 1st century BCE (Geva & Hershkovitz 2006, 104, pl. 4.10: 2–3).

Cooking pot no. 2 is a closed pot with a short, flat, squared rim that sometimes has an inturned sharp edge. The pot has a tall, slightly carinated vertical neck with two horizontal ridges, flat handles extending from rim to shoulder, a squat body, a flattened base with a pointed center, and dense wheel ridging on the body. This type of cooking pot was very common at Horvat Ashun in contexts dating to the

Early Roman period, and during the excavations it was even nicknamed ‘Ashun’s cooking pot’. Actually, this type of pot is typical of sites in the Modi'in hills and the northern Shephelah region such as Horvat Hamutzav (Terem forthcoming), Tittora (Kogan-Zehavi 2012, figs. 19: 1; 20: 1–2), Horvat Hermeshit (Greenhut 1998, 159, fig. 42: 2–4), Ben Shemen Junction (Peilstocker 2003, 54–55, fig. 78: 4; Zelinger & Eshel 2013, 271, fig. 1: 1), Nesher-Ramla (De Vincenz 2010, 137–138, 153–154, pls. 8.21: 3, 5; 8.38: 3), as well as at other sites such as Tel Goded (Sagiv et al. 1998, fig. 6: 5). At these sites such cooking pots have been found together with the well known and very common cooking pot from the end of the Second Temple period – the closed cooking pot with a triangular rim. They have been found at these sites in both domestic and funerary contexts. In general, this type (or versions of it) has also been found elsewhere in Judea such as at Masada, Jericho and even along the coast up to Caesarea in the north. They are dated from the late 1st century BCE to the first third of the 2nd century CE (Bar-Nathan 2002, 172–173, type J-CP4; 2006, 159, type M-CP2; Gendelman 2018, 115, fig. 3: 14).

Lamp no. 3 is a wheel-made lamp based on Rhodian prototypes with a double-conical body. The lamp has red slip on its upper part, a flat rim around the filling hole and a nozzle with a tube-shaped profile, rounded at the tip, attached to the reservoir. The base is a concave disk. Although this type usually has a pierced lug on the shoulder, our lamp does not (for a lamp without a lug from Tel Dor, see Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995, 237, type 10, fig. 5.15: 9). Lamps of this type have been found at Hellenistic sites in our region together with Rhodian lamps and should therefore be dated to the mid-third century through the first half of the 2nd century BCE (Sussman 2009, 27). At Maresha such lamps have been found in well-dated contexts together with coins and stamped amphorae, indicating that they were in use up to the first third of the 2nd century BCE and perhaps a little later (Ambar-Armon 2007, 90). Those at Tel Dor have been dated even later – to 200–50 BCE (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995, 237).

The ceramic finds indicate that the cave was used for burial during two time periods: the 2nd century BCE, based on the oil lamp, and the second half of the 1st century BCE–early 1st century CE, based on the jar and cooking pot. The disturbed condition of the finds complicates the inferring of burial customs from this tomb; however, it seems to have been used for primary burial.

Tombs 2903 and 2904

Tombs 2903 and 2904 are two adjacent rock-cut tombs located approximately 430 m northeast of the Horvat Ashun farmhouse on the southwestern slope of an adjacent

hill facing and in view of Horvat Ashun. Tomb 2903 (ITM 198797/646057) was accessed via a narrow rock-cut corridor (0.95x2.75 m; L2902; fig. 6). The tomb entrance was found sealed by a heavy stone slab; the spaces between the sealing stone and the rock face were filled with small, flat stones (figs. 7, 9). However, the natural rock ceiling of the tomb was found breached, most probably the result of a looting attempt. The tomb itself (L2903; fig. 8) was a very small cave

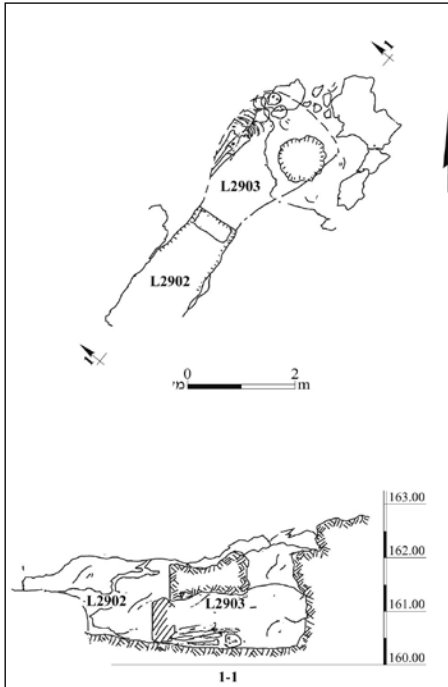


Figure 6: Plan and section of tomb 2903

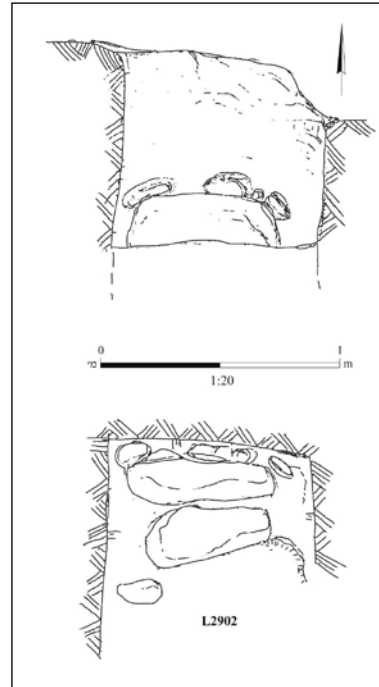


Figure 7: Plan and section of the sealed entrance to tomb 2903



Figure 8: The inside of tomb 2903 during excavation



Figure 9: View of the sealed entrance to tomb 2903

(3.79 m² in area, 1 m high) – in essence, a wide *kokh*. The burial was adjacent to the western wall of the tomb. Three adult males (see appendix A: 3–5) were found entombed in anatomical articulation, with the head at the north and the legs at the opening of the tomb (south). The finds suggest that these were three primary burials where the individuals were placed one on the top of the other within the small cave.⁵ Two ceramic vessels were found in the tomb: one intact juglet near the skull and one intact piriform bottle near the legs of the lower skeletons (fig. 10).

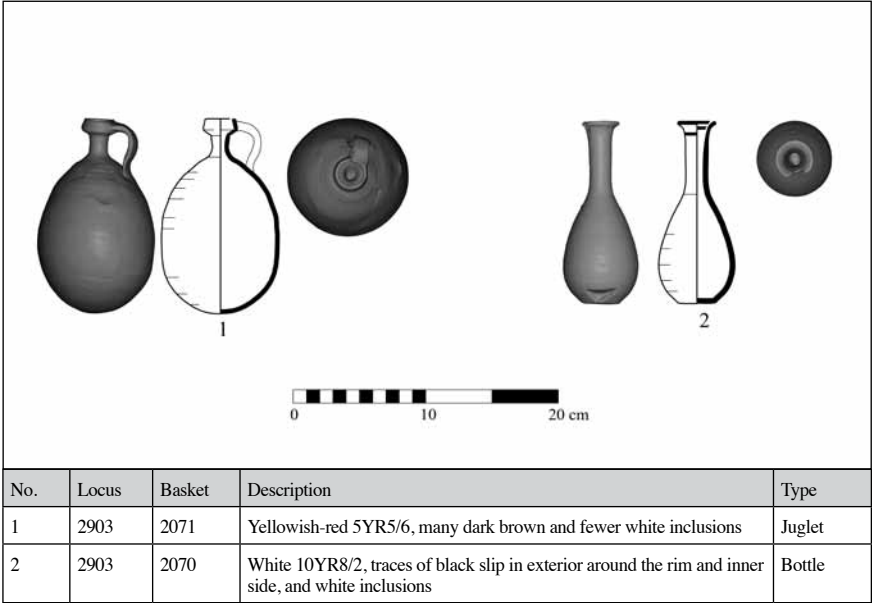


Figure 10: The pottery from tomb 2903

Juglet no. 1 has a cup-shaped rim, elongated piriform body, flattened handle from rim to shoulder and round base. This is the most popular type at sites throughout Judea from the 1st century BCE–1st century CE (Bar-Nathan 2006, 190, type M-JT1).

Piriform bottle no. 2, also known as a ‘Judean Unguentarium’ is characterized by thin walls, a pear-shaped body, narrow neck, everted rim and flat, string-cut base. It has two lines of black paint on its exterior, one on the rim and one on the neck below the rim, as well as two lines of black paint on the interior of the rim. Bottles decorated with reddish-brown or black paint on the rim and neck, like our example,

5 It is unknown if the three men were interred at the same time or in three separate burials over a period of time.

have been found in the Jewish Quarter excavations in Jerusalem, stratum 3; they are dated to the second half of the 1st century BCE (Geva & HersHKovitz 2006, 107–108). According to Rachel Bar-Nathan, these bottles first appeared in Judea in 31 BCE, and they remained in use in the 1st century CE (Bar-Nathan 2006, 203, type M-UN2B).

Based on these finds, it seems that the use of the cave should be dated to the second half of the 1st century BCE or possibly the beginning of the 1st century CE.

Tomb 2904 (ITM 198788/646048) is similar in form to tomb 2903 (fig. 11). The tomb entrance was at the northwestern edge of a relatively wide, curving corridor (L2901; 1.25x2.40 m). Here, too, the tomb itself was basically a single *kokh* (L2904; 0.85x1.9 m, 0.78 m high; fig. 12). The tomb was discovered opened and with no accompanying finds other than the burial. One adult female (see appendix A: 6) was entombed in articulation in a primary burial, with her head near the western inner edge of the tomb, and feet at the eastern edge of the tomb, near the opening. Based on the proximity of the two tombs and the same form of burial, tomb 2904 can be dated to the same period as tomb 2903. Here, too, it seems that the users of these tombs practiced primary burial alone and when necessary they entombed one body above another.

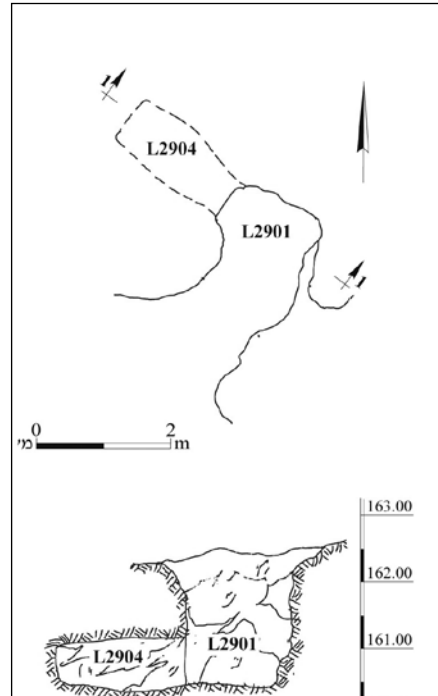


Figure 11: Plan and section of tomb 2904



Figure 12: View inside tomb 2904

Tomb 232

Tomb 232 (ITM 198836/646090) is a *kokhim* cave (fig. 13) located 470 m northeast of the Horvat Ashun farmhouse, on the northeastern slope of the adjacent hill. The tomb may have belonged to residents of Horvat Berfilya, which faces the slope.⁶ The tomb entrance and all the *kokhim* were found sealed and undisturbed.

The tomb entrance was adjacent to the northwestern corner of a square, rock-cut courtyard, possibly a quarry. The oblong entranceway (L232; 0.75x1.80 m) had one steep step leading to a sealed entrance (fig. 14). A lamp nozzle (see below fig. 18: 8) was found in front of the sealed entrance. The sealing stone was bossed to seal the entrance completely. Beyond the entrance was a further descent into the burial chamber (L237; 3x3.4 m area, approximately 2 m high). There were four *kokhim* along the northern wall and four along the western wall. Each *kokh* was found sealed with a shaped stone slab held in place by mud mortar (fig. 15). The *kokhim* will be described by locus.

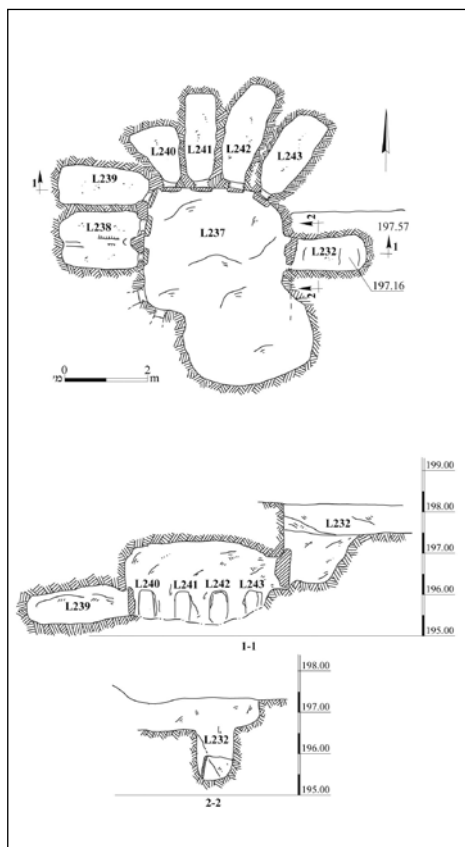


Figure 13: Plan and sections of tomb 232

6 Horvat Berfilya (ITM 199011/646430) is a large, ancient settlement that has not yet been excavated. The ruins of the Late Ottoman–British Mandate period village cover the remains of preceding settlements. The village is mentioned in documents from the Crusader period (Kedar 2014, 34–35). Archaeological surveys have revealed evidence of settlement during the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Medieval and Ottoman periods (Shavit 2013, site 364). In a recent survey by the first author of this paper, a subterranean, rock-cut, stepped installation, probably a *mikveh*, was identified (ITM 198040/646050). This would be evidence of Jewish settlement at the site during the Early Roman period.



Figure 14: View of sealed entrance to tomb 232 (photo: A. Peretz)



Figure 15: View of the northern and western walls of tomb 232 (photo: A. Peretz); Note the sealed *kokhim* and the burial in front of the northern wall

The northern *kokhim*

L243 (0.90x2.12 m, 0.80 m high) contained the primary burials of an adult female and an adult male (see appendix A: 8–9) side by side, both in anatomical articulation. The male was entombed with his head at the south, towards the opening of the *kokh*, and the legs at the north. The female was placed in the opposite orientation, head to the north and legs to the south.

L242 (0.90x2.42 m, 0.80 m high) contained the burials of one female and three children (see appendix A: 10–13). The skeleton of the female was found in articulation, supine, with her head at the southern edge of the *kokh* (the opening) and feet to the north (fig. 16). The three children were found to her west. The children were in



Figure 16: The burial in *kokh* 242 – the articulated bones of the female in the center of the *kokh*, the bones of the children directly to her left, and a ceramic bottle (photo: A. Peretz)

primary burial position but disturbed. It seems that the children were buried first, and when the time came to bury the female, the children's remains were moved aside to clear space for her. Two piriform bottles, one small and the other medium-sized and carinated (near the discus base), were found in the *kokh* (see below fig. 18: 5–6).

L241 (0.75x2.09 m, 0.80 m high) contained the burials of two adults (one male and one female) and three children (see appendix A: 14–17). Although it seems to have been used for secondary burial, it may have been primary burial disturbed by

later burials. Three medium-sized piriform bottles and a complete ‘Herodian’ lamp (see below fig. 18: 2–4, 7) were found in the *kokh*.

L240 is a relatively small burial chamber shaped like a rounded triangle (1.09 m² in area, 0.80 m high). The skeletal remains of one adult male and three children (see appendix A: 18–20) were found gathered in a pile in the center of the *kokh* (fig. 17). The size of the *kokh* and the fact that no anatomical articulation was found between the bones suggest that this *kokh* was used for secondary burial and not primary burial.



Figure 17: The burial in *kokh* 240 (photo: A. Peretz); Note the piled bones in secondary burial

The western *kokhim*

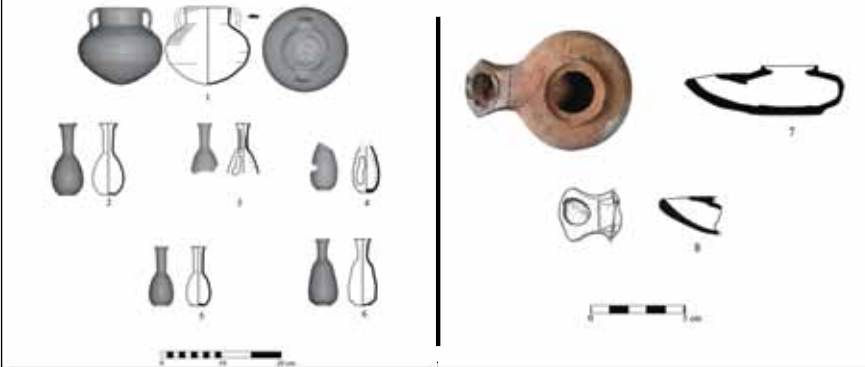
L239 (0.92x2.00 m, 0.80 m high) contained the burials of two adult males, an adult female and two children (see appendix A: 21–25). One adult male was found in articulation, supine in the center of the *kokh*, apparently the last primary burial in the *kokh*. His head was at the east end of the *kokh* (the opening), and his feet were at the west. The adult female and two children were found in partial articulation and seem to be primary burials that were disturbed. Unarticulated bones of another adult male were found below these burials. The finds suggest that the *kokh* was first used for the burial of the first male, and his bones were subsequently moved to make room for the burial of the female and the children, who, in turn, were moved aside to make room for the primary burial of the second male. A broken cooking pot was also found in the *kokh*.

L238 (0.72x2.00 m, 0.80 m high) was found covered by the collapse of the cave ceiling. The southern wall of the *kokh* had been breached, thus connecting the *kokh* to a sealed *kokh* (0.60x1.85 m) to the south. Neither *kokh* was excavated.

One female was entombed alongside the northern wall (L237) in front of the sealed *kokhim* (see appendix A: 7). This was a primary burial identified as a young adult. She was found in articulation, supine, with her head at the west and legs to the east. A small cooking pot was found near her head (fig. 18: 1).

The southern part of the tomb was covered by the deterioration of the cave ceiling and was not excavated. An additional *kokh* was identified at the southern edge of the western cave wall, and there is at least one additional sealed *kokh* on the southern wall.

The pottery from tomb 232 (figs. 18–19)



No.	Locus	Basket	Description	Type
1	237	2032	Exterior dark reddish-brown 2.5YR3, interior red 2.5YR5/8, dark gray core 2.5YRN3, and a few white inclusions	Small cooking pot
2	241	2024	Reddish-yellow 5YR7/6, possible traces of red slip splash 7.5YR5/8, and chalk accretion all over the body	Bottle
3	241	2027/1	Light red 2.5YR6/6 and splash of red slip on the body	Bottle
4	241	2027	Light red 2.5YR6/6 and splash of red slip from rim to body; Discus base (not drawn)	Bottle
5	242	2021	Pink 5YR7/4 changes to reddish-yellow 5YR6/6, and small dark brown inclusions	Bottle
6	242	2017	Exterior white 10YR8/2 changes to very pale brown, interior reddish-yellow 5YR6/6, and small dark brown inclusions	Bottle
7	242	2022	Light red 2.5YR6/6 and soot in wick hole	Herodian lamp
8	232	2004	Reddish-yellow 5YR7/6-6/6 and soot in wick hole	Herodian lamp

Figure 18: The pottery from tomb 232



Figure 19: The intact and restored vessels from tomb 232 (photo: C. Amit)

Cooking pot no. 1 is a small, globular pot with a small, thin triangular rim, vertical neck and two loop handles that extend from rim to body. Small cooking pots were less common in the late Second Temple period and generally have only one handle, an everted neck and a simple rim, although triangular rims have also been found (for an example from a dwelling, see Geva 2010, 126, type 2, pl. 4.5: 11–12; for examples from burials outside Jerusalem, see Weksler-Bdolah 1998, 44*, fig. 37: 5–6; Abu Raya & Zissu 2000, 6*, fig. 4: 15). After the First Revolt this type of cooking pot, now with two handles and a triangular rim like the pot found here, became more popular; they have been found in contexts dating to the period between the two revolts (Bar-Nathan & Eisenstadt 2013, 30, type J-CP19, pl. 1.24: 39; Rapuano 2013, 68; Terem 2016, 117, 164, type 8, pl. 51: 465–468).

The five piriform bottles found in the tomb are characterized by a pear-shaped body, narrow neck, everted rim and flat, string-cut base. Two of the three specimens from locus 241 have red paint splashes on the body (covered with chalk accretion). This was the most popular type of bottle in Judea in the 1st century CE and has been recovered from both dwellings and tombs (see Geva 2010, 124–125, pl. 4.4: 4–10).

Lamps 7 and 8 are wheel-made, knife-pared lamps also known as ‘Herodian lamps’. A complete lamp decorated with a thin line incised across the nozzle was found, as was a nozzle decorated with a horizontal rouletted line. This type of lamp appeared towards the end of Herod’s reign; it was very common in the 1st century CE, and continued to be used in the following century (Barag & Hershkovitz 1994, 44–45). The features of the nozzles of lamps 7 and 8 and the reservoir of the lamp 7

correspond to Robert Smith's type 2 and to Masada type CII–CIII (Smith 1961, 65; Barag & HersHKovitz 1994, 43–47).

The ceramic finds at tomb 232 indicate that the tomb was mainly used in the 1st century CE. The young female entombed in front of the sealed *kokhim* seems to have been the last burial in the tomb. The small cooking pot may indicate that this was in the early 2nd century CE.

The fact that the cave and all the *kokhim* were found sealed allows for a well-grounded reconstruction of the burial customs practiced in this tomb. The tomb owners would bury their dead in primary burial, supine within the *kokhim*. While in most cases the feet faced the inner edge of the *kokh* and the head was towards the opening, the people may not have been punctilious regarding the direction.⁷ Primary burial of multiple individuals within one *kokh* was possible since the *kokhim* are relatively wide. Apparently, when there was insufficient space in a *kokh*, the bones of previous burials could be moved slightly aside, resulting in what we have described as disturbed primary burial. In certain circumstances, bodies could be entombed in primary burial within the burial chamber, outside of the *kokhim*. *Kokh* 240 and possibly *kokh* 241 were used for secondary burial. Most probably bones from primary burials in either the *kokhim* or the burial chamber were collected and piled in these *kokhim* in order to clear space for new burials. The owners of this tomb did not use ossuaries.⁸

The vessels from this tomb and the previous tombs described are typical finds in burial caves in the Second Temple period throughout Judea. In our opinion, they were utilitarian: the lamps were for lighting the tomb during burial, the cooking pots for water to wash the body, and the bottles and juglets for oils and perfumes used to prepare the body for burial, or to make the burial cave smell better (Safrai 1976, 776).⁹ They may have been left in the tomb following use due to ritual impurity.

Tombs 493, 926 and 494

Three additional burial caves with *kokhim* were surveyed on the northern slope of the hill of Horvat Ashun.

7 According to Amos Kloner and Boaz Zissu (2003, 49), in most cases the bodies were placed with the head at the inner part of the *kokh* and the feet nearer the opening.

8 Something similar was noted at Tel Goded, where two adjacent burial caves from the Late Hellenistic–Middle Roman periods were excavated. One contained ossuaries and the other did not; see Sagiv et al. 1998, 13*.

9 For a detailed discussion of the functions of the finds in the burial caves, see Weksler-Bdolah 1998, 41*–51*; Kloner & Zissu 2003, 57–65; 2007, 123–135.

Tomb 493 is located approximately 45 m northwest of the Horvat Ashun farmhouse (ITM 198469/645724). The tomb (fig. 20) was entered via a rock-cut courtyard (L927; 2.6x3.05 m). The original tomb entrance (0.50x0.6 m), hewn out of the southern wall of the courtyard, was found sealed with a shaped sealing stone; however, looters had made a big hole through the cave wall above the original entrance. The tomb consisted of one burial chamber (3.00x3.45 m) with four *kokhim* in its eastern wall and three *kokhim* and a small niche in its southern wall. The cave seems to have been looted, as the sealing stones of the *kokhim* were found strewn in front of the *kokhim*. One *kokh* was discovered partially sealed, but it, too, had been looted via a breach in the wall of the neighboring *kokh*.

Tomb 926 is located approximately 165 m northwest of the Horvat Ashun farmhouse (ITM 198384/645781). The tomb had a rock-cut courtyard (3.5x4.4 m) and was entered via a relatively large opening in the center of its southern wall (fig. 21). The rock outcrop above the opening was cut smooth, creating a tall façade. The burial chamber (2.5x2.9 m) was actually the lower level of a large, possibly natural cave (37.6 m²). It had three *kokhim* in its eastern wall, two in the southern wall and one at the northern edge of the western wall. Both levels of the cave and the *kokhim* were discovered looted.

Tomb 494 is located 210 m west of the Horvat Ashun farmhouse (ITM 198301/645664). The tomb was accessed via a courtyard (2.4x2.7 m) hewn out of a rock outcrop. At the eastern end of the courtyard one could descend into a rectangular entranceway (0.75x1 m). At its center there was an additional step down to the cave entrance. The cave was found filled with earth and was not excavated. It seems to contain one burial chamber with five *kokhim*. Human bones collected from the center of the cave were identified as two right adult humeri (see appendix A: 26–27).

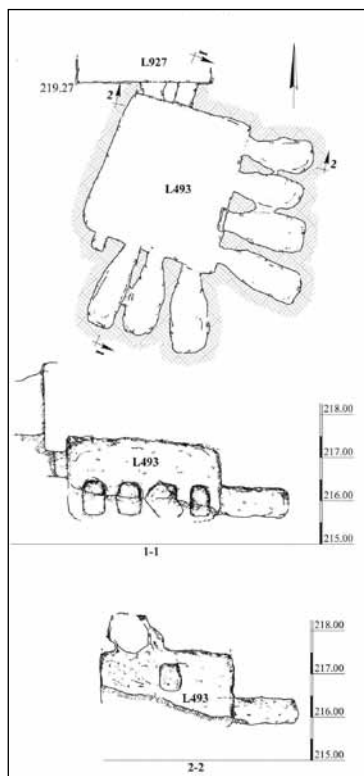


Figure 20: Plan and sections of tomb 493

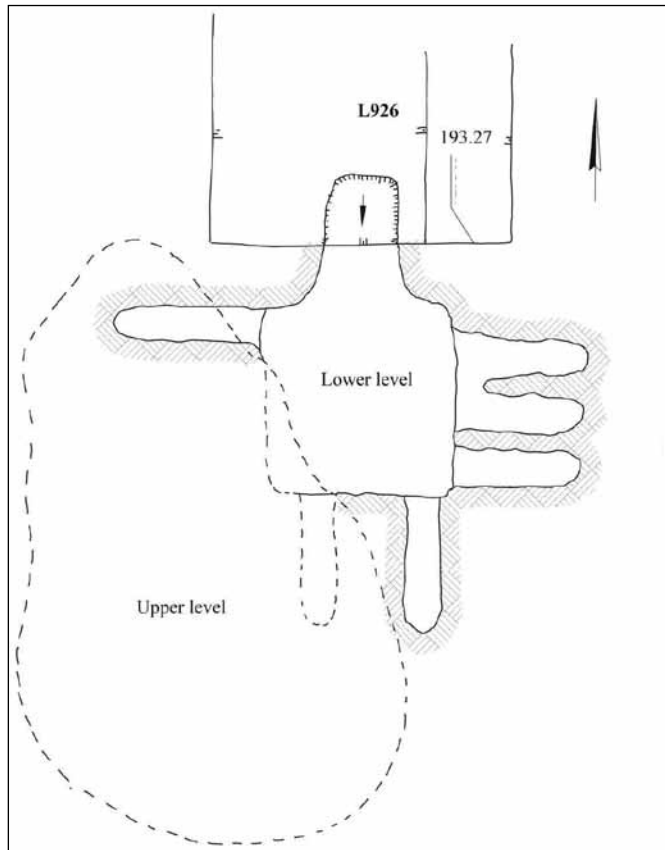


Figure 21: Plan of tomb 926

Discussion

Our knowledge of burial customs in Judea during the Second Temple period is based on thousands of surveyed and excavated tombs as well as written sources. The necropolis of Second Temple period Jerusalem (Kloner & Zissu 2003; 2007), the necropolis of Jericho (Hachlili & Killebrew 1999), the cemeteries of Jaffa (Jakoel 2016), and many tombs in rural areas (e.g. Zissu 2001; Klein 2009; Zelinger 2009; Raviv 2018, I, 190–224) have been documented and researched extensively.

This data has resulted in the understanding that burial during this period followed a set of procedures consisting mainly of primary burial in a family tomb (typically a *kokhim* cave), where each individual was entombed supine in a *kokh*, followed by collection of the bones and secondary burial. The secondary burial could be performed by depositing the loose bones into a designated location within the burial cave such as a collective *kokh*, a repository chamber, a pit or a niche. Beginning in the last third of the 1st century BCE, the most common secondary

burial practice was collecting the bones in an ossuary (Kloner & Zissu 2007, 103–108).¹⁰

When comparing burial customs in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods at Horvat Ashun to these set procedures, significant discrepancies appear. First, we have evidence of burial in small caves (L460, L2903 and L2904) without *kokhim* or burial shelves.¹¹ Second, there is no evidence of systematic secondary burial. Not only were no ossuaries found in tomb 232, a sealed cave from the 1st century CE, but in all the caves where skeletal remains were found in situ, the deceased were interred one alongside the other or on top of the bones of the other.¹² If the bones of the previous inhumations were moved, they were either pushed to the sides of the *kokh* or moved to a *kokh* (L240, L241). This was not a systematic procedure but rather functional – to clear space for future burials.

It should be noted that although the majority of tombs excavated in Jerusalem and throughout rural Judea seem to have followed the set procedure mentioned above, other forms of burial have been documented. In regard to Jerusalem, Kloner and Zissu (2007, 83–105) discuss examples of primary burial in sarcophagus-like troughs in *arcosolia*, as well as field burials and dug graves. They also mention a few cases where primary burial is found next to earlier bones. However, unlike the tombs discussed here, it seems that in those examples there was also secondary burial in ossuaries. At Jericho and Ein Gedi, primary burial in wooden coffins was common (Hadas 1994, 57; Hachlili & Killebrew 1999, 167). At nearby Lod, founded on sand dunes, it seems that the majority of burials from the period were graves dug into the sand or constructed tombs containing the primary burial of one individual (Yanai & Erlich 2015, 212). There is also evidence of at least one ashlar constructed family tomb imitative of a *kokhim* cave, with primary burial in constructed *kokhim* and secondary burial in ossuaries (Clermont-Ganneau 1896, 341–345).

10 Recently Kloner & Zelinger (2007, 209–210) and subsequently Abadi (2017, 28–30) and Raviv (2018, I, 190–203; 2019, 20–22), have suggested identifying the standing pit-type tomb (a cave with a standing pit surrounded on three sides with burial benches) as the typical tomb of the Late Hellenistic/Hasmonean period. However, there were definitely many additional forms of burial.

11 It should be noted that the finds in the small tombs without *kokhim* are dated slightly earlier than the finds from the tomb with *kokhim*. Nevertheless, we do not claim that this is a chronological typology.

12 This practice seems to transgress a regulation in the relatively late Tannaitic tractate *Semahot*: Two corpses may not be buried beside one another, nor a corpse beside bones, nor bones beside a corpse. Rabbi Judah says: “Whomsoever a person may sleep with when he is living, he may be buried with when he is dead” (*Semahot* 13, 8).

First, the Judeans who used these tombs in the 1st century BCE–1st century CE may not have followed this late regulation. Second, they were probably family members and may have been included in R. Judah’s clause regarding “whomsoever a person may sleep with when he is living”.

In the immediate rural area, there are many examples of *kokhim* caves with primary burial in the *kokhim* and secondary burial in ossuaries, e.g. Kh. el-Hummam/Kh. Midieh (Zissu & Perry 2015, 330–332) and Ben Shemen Junction (Zelinger 2009, 22–25, 133). However, there are definitely other forms of burial nearby. For example, a thorough salvage excavation of the hill to the south of the large rural site of Tittora found that the hill seems to have been used as the local necropolis (Kogan-Zehavi 2012, 13–56). The excavations there revealed that the local residents during the Late Hellenistic–Early Roman periods were buried in various ways: in large, mostly natural caves, which were also used for burial in the Iron II Age; in small round caves, similar to tomb 460 at Horvat Ashun; in Iron Age bench-type tombs; in standing pit-type tombs; in *kokhim* caves where no ossuaries were found; and in one case in a *kokhim* cave with an ossuary. The excavations of the necropolis of Kh. Beit Sila revealed a similar picture of a variety of forms of burial caves, all used during the Second Temple period (Batz 2003, 114–116). It should be noted that the picture of the variety of forms of burial practiced simultaneously emerges when all the burial caves surrounding a settlement are excavated, including sealed contexts, as opposed to sporadic finds or surveys of looted contexts.

The above review demonstrates how although there seem to have been typical forms of burial during the Second Temple period, these were not rigid practices or religious customs, but rather a variety of burial practices existing side by side. Many scholars have inferred ideologies and beliefs in regard to death and life after death from burial customs, but it seems that caution is needed and generalizations should be avoided. A variety of burial customs implies a variety of beliefs and ideologies. The wide variety of beliefs, ideologies and burial customs, often adopted from surrounding cultures, is also hinted at in the rabbinical literature, as demonstrated by Saul Lieberman (1965).

There were also practical considerations. Secondary burial may have been a necessity in a city like Jerusalem where there was limited space for hewing burial caves for the city's large population. At a farmstead like Horvat Ashun there was no shortage of rock outcrops where small burial caves could be hewn, with or without *kokhim*, in the hill's chalk. The quality of the chalk may also have influenced the size of the burial caves. At sites with steady chalk bedrock a multigenerational family might hew a multi-chambered burial cave system. This may not have been possible at Horvat Ashun, where the chalk bedrock was crumbly and had many fissures, so multiple small caves were hewn. To quote the 2nd century CE sage Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel II, in regard to the technical standard of burial caves: "All depends on the nature of the rock" (*Mishnah, Baba Batra* 6, 8).

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Appendix A: Summary of sex and age of the human skeletal remains in the tombs, burial positions and burial goods

	Locus	Adults			Children (0–15)	Age	Burial position	Burial goods
No.		Male	Female	Unknown				
1	460	+				>19	Disturbed (unknown)	Oil lamp, cooking pot, jar
2			+			>19	Disturbed (unknown)	
Total: 2		1	1					
3	2903	+				>19	Primary	Juglet, bottle
4		+				35–45	Primary	
5		+				>40	Primary	
Total: 3		3						
6	2904		+			18–19	Primary	
Total: 1			1					
Tomb 232								
7	237		+			17–18	Primary	Cooking pot
8	243		+			25–30	Primary	
9		+				>19	Primary	
10	242		+			30–40	Primary	Two bottles
11					+	0–0.5	Primary disturbed	
12					+	1.5–2.5	Primary disturbed	
13					+	12–15	Primary disturbed	
14	241	+				>19	Primary disturbed/ secondary	Three bottles, oil lamp
15			+			40–50	Primary disturbed/ secondary	
16					+	10–15	Primary disturbed/ secondary	
17					+	1–2	Primary disturbed/ secondary	
18	240	+				40–50	Secondary	
19					+	10–15	Secondary	
20					+	0.5–1.5	Secondary	

	Locus	Adults			Children (0–15)	Age	Burial position	Burial goods
21	239	+				>19	Primary	Cooking pot
22			+			>19	Primary disturbed	
23					+	10–15	Primary disturbed	
24					+	0–0.5	Primary disturbed	
25		+				>19	Disturbed	
Total: 19		5	5		9			
26	494			+		>15	Unknown	
27				+		>15	Unknown	
Total: 2				2				
Total	27	9	7	2	9			

תקציר בעברית

קבורה טיפוסית ולא טיפוסית מהתקופה ההלניסטית המאוחרת והרומית הקדומה סביב חורבת אשון בגבעות מודיעין אברהם שמעון טנדלר, שולמית טרם וורד אשד

שבע מערות קבורה מהתקופה ההלניסטית המאוחרת עד התקופה הרומית הקדומה נחפרו בסביבה הקרובה של חורבת אשון - אתר כפרי המתוארך מהתקופה ההלניסטית עד לתקופה הרומית המאוחרת - בגבעות מודיעין. ארבע מערות היו מערות כוכים שאופייניות לימי הבית השני, ושלוש מערות היו מערות קטנות ללא כוכים; שתי מערות נמצאו חתומות. רוב השלדים נמצאו בקבורה ראשונית, וכמה פרטים נקברו אחד ליד השני או אחד על השני בתוך מערה קטנה אחת או כוך אחד. במערות הנידונות לא נמצאו גלוסקמאות. נראה שתושבי היישוב לא נהגו לקבור קבורה משנית באופן שיטתי. במאמר מוצגות מערות הקבורה עם תיאור השלדים והממצא הקרמי. המערות שנמצאו חתומות מאפשרות ליצור שחזור מבוסס של מנהגי הקבורה שבהם השתמשו במערה. המאמר מראה שאף שבמהלך ימי הבית השני היו דרכי קבורה טיפוסיות - לא נראה שהן התבססו על כללים נוקשים או על מנהגים דתיים, ולצידן היו גם דרכי קבורה מגוונות אחרות.