

Underground Hiding Complexes in Israel and the Bar Kokhba Revolt

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Riassunto

COMPLESSI DI NASCONDIGLI SOTTERRANEI IN ISRAELE E LA RIVOLTA DI BAR KOKHBA

La Seconda Rivolta Giudaica contro Roma, nota comunemente come la Rivolta di Bar Kokhba (132-135/6 d.C.), è stata uno degli eventi più disastrosi nella storia del popolo ebraico. Mentre la Guerra Giudaica è stata descritta dettagliatamente da un testimone oculare - Giuseppe Flavio - manca una cronaca contemporanea e dettagliata della Rivolta di Bar Kokhba. Gli studiosi di questo periodo sono costretti a fare affidamento sul breve resoconto di Cassio Dione (*Storia Romana* 69, 12-14), e su descrizioni tramandate dalla letteratura rabbinica, brevi e qualche volta leggendarie. Per questi motivi, gran parte della nostra conoscenza di quel periodo si basa su materiale archeologico, numismatico, epigrafico e papirologico.

In questo articolo descriviamo una delle scoperte archeologiche più importanti degli ultimi anni sull'epoca della rivolta: i sistemi di nascondigli scavati nella roccia e il loro contributo alla comprensione del carattere e dell'estensione geografica della rivolta.

Uno degli aspetti più affascinanti per quel che riguarda gli insediamenti nel contesto della Rivolta di Bar Kokhba, è l'uso esteso di cavità ed installazioni sotterranee come nascondigli, vie di fuga e luoghi di rifugio. Distingueremo due gruppi principali di cavità: sistemi di nascondigli e cavità di rifugio.

La maggior parte dei nascondigli venne scavata nella roccia sotto i vecchi insediamenti. Essi si trovano principalmente nella Shephelah giudaica (o Piedi delle Colline, situati ad ovest delle montagne di Gerusalemme e dell'Hebron), e anche nelle montagne di Gerusalemme e dell'Hebron, nelle montagne Beth El e in Galilea. I sistemi di nascondigli vennero realizzati principalmente prima e durante la Rivolta di Bar Kokhba. Pochi sistemi giudaici - per lo più piccoli e semplici - datano ai tempi precedenti la Guerra Giudaica contro Roma (66-70 d.C.).

Le cavità di rifugio si trovano per lo più nel Deserto Giudaico, sulle ripide falesie attorno al Mar Morto e alla Vallata Giordana. Queste cavità sono fondamentalmente naturali, e i manufatti ivi trovati mostrano che sono servite da rifugio per persone provenienti dalle montagne della Giudea e dalla Vallata Giordana, quando fuggirono per salvare la vita alla fine della Rivolta di Bar Kokhba. In tutto l'antico Israele, e specialmente nella Shephelah giudaica, vennero creati degli ambienti sotterranei scavati nella roccia come parte delle infrastrutture economiche e fisiche di città e villaggi, per lo più durante il periodo ellenistico e il primo periodo romano. In molti siti, sono state scoperte delle strutture sotterranee artificiali, cadute in disuso quando furono intersecate da "tane" artificiali (stretti tunnel), e collegate a formare complessi ramificati sotterranei con "tane" strette e ondulate, denominati "sistemi di nascondigli". Alcune componenti architettoniche dei sistemi di nascondigli (come gli stretti tunnel- "tane", pozzi verticali, dispositivi di chiusura e blocco) costituiscono delle caratteristiche distintive della loro funzione, e permettono di identificare il fenomeno.

Le "tane" collegano ambienti esterni usati in precedenza come cisterne, cave di calcare, bagni rituali ad immersione, presse per olive, magazzini e granai, stalle e ambienti per l'allevamento di animali, colombaie, etc; il fatto che venissero collegati rendeva gli ambienti non più utilizzabili per le loro funzioni precedenti e danneggiavano di proposito lo stile di vita e l'economia dei locali. Le "tane" sono basse e strette, e si possono attraversare solamente carponi, scivolando sulle ginocchia o strisciando. Le "tane" piegano di tanto in tanto di vari angoli e in alcuni casi cambia l'altezza del pavimento. I pozzi vennero scavati per usarli come entrate e uscite. I pozzi avevano delle chiusure e le loro entrate erano cammuffate - di solito dentro una stanza o il cortile di una casa localizzata al di sopra. I pozzi che collegavano "tane" i cui pavimenti erano ad altezze diverse vennero scavati verticalmente dall'alto verso il basso. Le entrate alle stanze e alle "tane" venivano chiuse dall'interno, bloccate o isolate con vari tipi di chiusure. I pozzi verticali furono aperti sui soffitti delle stanze per rimuovere i detriti causati dai lavori di scavo; una volta completato il complesso, essi servivano da prese d'aria ed erano cammuffati in superficie. Il rifornimento regolare di acqua era cruciale. Molti sistemi erano collegati a cisterne. Una "tana" si apriva nella parte superiore di una cisterna a pochi metri sopra il suo pavimento, in modo che l'acqua poteva venire immagazzinata fino a quel punto; così la gente rifugiata nel complesso aveva un rifornimento costante di acqua ottenuto di nascosto.

Una carta dei sistemi di nascondigli in Giudea, che mostri anche la distribuzione degli attuali villaggi

ebraici, proprietà e fattorie, e confrontata con la carta della distribuzione delle monete coniate dall'amministrazione di Bar Kokhba e ritrovate in esplorazioni archeologiche controllate, può dare qualche indicazione sull'estensione geografica della rivolta. Un esame dei dati archeologici convalida i dati quantitativi di Cassio Dione (sebbene il suo rapporto possa essere un po' esagerato) sulla distruzione su vasta scala del territorio della Giudea durante la repressione della rivolta.

I sistemi di nascondigli erano fatti generalmente da residenti locali, che avevano conoscenze, capacità e una lunga tradizione di scavi. L'idea non era di origine straniera; è stata la manifestazione fisica della preparazione alla rivolta di una intera regione, tenendo conto delle condizioni locali, della qualità delle rocce, e forse, dell'impostazione militare del comando della rivolta. I sistemi vennero creati al di sotto di fattorie e proprietà di Giudei, in villaggi, e in siti fortificati sparsi in tutta la Giudea, non necessariamente per il controllo di strade importanti. Sopraluoghi e scavi recenti hanno fatto aumentare il numero dei sistemi di nascondigli conosciuti e ampliato la mappa della loro distribuzione. Oggi conosciamo più di 320 complessi, situati in più di 125 località della Giudea.

PAROLE CHIAVE: rivolta di Bar Kokhba, Seconda Guerra Giudaica, cavità di rifugio, ricerche archeologiche, opere sotterranee di stoccaggio, opere idrauliche.

Abstract

The Second Jewish revolt against Rome, commonly known as the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-135/6 C.E.), was one of the most disastrous events in the history of the Jewish people. While the Jewish War was described in great detail by an eye-witness – Flavius Josephus, the Bar Kokhba Revolt lacks a contemporary, detailed chronicle. The scholars of this period are compelled to rely on the abbreviation of Cassius Dio's short account (Roman History 69, 12-14), and few brief and sometimes legendary descriptions transmitted in the rabbinic literature. Therefore, much of the scholars' knowledge of the period is based on archaeological, numismatic, epigraphic and papyrological material.

The paper gives an overview of one of the most important archaeological finding from the time of this revolt, made in the last years: the rock-cut hiding complexes and their contribution to the understanding of the character and geographical extent of the revolt.

One of the fascinating settlement-related aspects of the Bar Kokhba Revolt is the extensive use of underground cavities and installations as hiding complexes, escape routes, and places of refuge. We should distinguish between two main groups of caves: hiding complexes and refuge caves.

Most of the hiding complexes were rock-cut underneath the ancient settlements. They are found mainly in the Judean Shephelah (or Foothills, located west of the Jerusalem and Hebron mountains), and also in the Jerusalem and Hebron mountains, the Beth El mountains and the Galilee. The hiding complexes were prepared mainly before and during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Few Judean systems - mainly small, unsophisticated ones - are dated to the time preceding the Jewish War against Rome (66-70 C.E.).

The refuge caves are found mainly in the Judean Desert, in the steep cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. These caves are basically natural, and the artifacts found in them make it evident that they served as places of refuge for people from the Judean mountains and the Jordan Valley when they fled for their lives at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Throughout ancient Israel, and especially in the Judean Shephelah, rock-cut underground chambers were created as part of the economic and physical infrastructure of towns and villages, mostly during the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. In many sites, man-made underground facilities have been discovered that fell into disuse when they were cut by man-made burrows and linked to form ramified underground complexes with narrow, winding burrows, designated as "Hiding Complexes". Certain architectural components in the hiding complexes (as narrow tunnels – "burrows", vertical shafts, locking and blocking devices) constitute distinguishing marks of their function, and enable the identification of the phenomenon.

The burrows link external chambers used previously as cisterns, limestone quarries, ritual immersion baths, olive presses, storerooms and granaries, stables and rooms for raising animals, columbaria, and so on; connecting them made the chambers unusable for their previous function and purposely impaired the local way of life and economy. The burrows are low and narrow and can only be traversed by walking on all fours, sliding on the knees, or crawling. The burrows bend from time to time at various angles and in some cases the height of the floor changes. Shafts were hewn for use as entrances or exits. The shafts had locks and their entrances were camouflaged - usually inside a room or courtyard of a house in the aboveground locality. Shafts connecting burrows whose floors were at different heights were hewn vertically from the top down.

The entrances to rooms and burrows were closed from inside, blocked, or cut off with various kinds of locks. Vertical shafts were hewn in the ceilings of the rooms for the removal of rubble from the hewing; once the

complex was completed, they served as air vents and were camouflaged on the surface. A regular supply of water was crucial. Many complexes were connected to cisterns. A burrow opened into the upper portion of the cistern a few meters above its floor so that water could be stored up to that point; thus the people hiding in the complex had a steady supply of water that could be drawn secretly.

A map of hiding complexes in Judea, also showing the distribution of contemporaneous Jewish farms, estates and villages and compared with the distribution map of coins minted by Bar Kokhba's administration and found in controlled archaeological explorations, can give some indication on the geographical extent of the revolt. An examination of the archaeological data supports Cassius Dio's quantitative report (although the report may be somewhat exaggerated) of the large scale destruction of Judean countryside during the suppression of the revolt.

The complexes were generally made by local residents who had knowledge, experience, and a long tradition of hewing. The idea was not a foreign import; it was a physical manifestation of the preparation of an entire region for revolt, keeping in mind local conditions, the quality of the bedrock, and perhaps the military conception of the leadership of the revolt. The complexes were created underneath Jewish farms and estates, in villages, and at fortified sites scattered throughout Judea, not necessarily controlling main roads. Recent surveys and excavations have increased the number of known hiding complexes and expanded the map of their distribution. Today we know of more than 320 complexes, situated in more than 125 Jewish localities in Judea.

KEY WORDS: *The Bar Kokhba Revolt, The Jewish War, Refuge caves, Rock-cut Hiding Complexes, Archaeological findings, Rock-cut Stables, Rock-cut Shafts.*

PREFACE

The identification of hiding complexes is a breakthrough in research on the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the second Jewish revolt against the Romans (132-135 C.E.). The existence of these artificially cut systems has been corroborated by their discovery in more than one hundred thirty ancient sites in Judea.

One of the fascinating settlement-related aspects of the Bar Kokhba Revolt is the extensive use of underground cavities and installations as hiding complexes, escape routes, and places of refuge. We should distinguish between two main groups of caves: hiding complexes and refuge caves.

Most of the hiding complexes were hewn artificially under or near residential buildings in ancient settlements (figs. 1, 2). They are found mainly in the Judean Shephelah (or Foothills, located west of the Jerusalem and Hebron mountains), and also in the Jerusalem and Hebron mountains, the Beth El mountains and the Galilee. The type of rock used was mainly soft limestone, which is common in the Shephelah but also harder formations of limestone, found in the mountainous regions. The hiding complexes were prepared mainly before and during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Recently we have been able to move up the dating of a few systems - mainly small, unsophisticated ones - to the time preceding the Jewish War against Rome (66-70 C.E.).

The refuge caves are found mainly in the Judaean Desert, in the steep cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley (figs. 3, 4). These caves are basically natural, and the artifacts found in them make it evident that they served as places of refuge for people from the Judean mountains and the Jordan Valley when they fled for their lives at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt

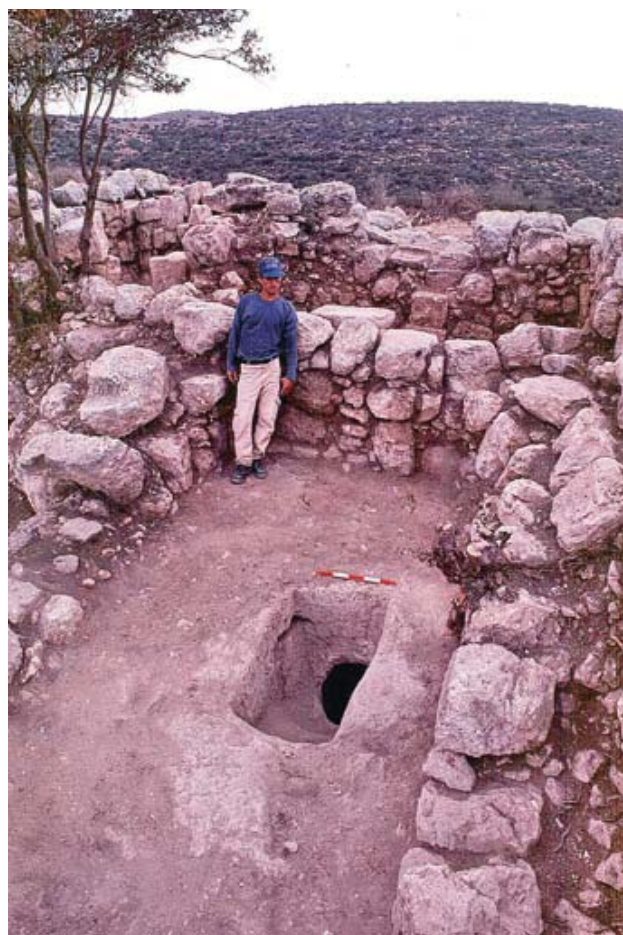


Fig. 1 - Shaft cut into floor of room, leading to Complex XIV at H. 'Ethri (photo by Avram Graicer).

Fig. 1 - Pozzo, scavato nel pavimento di una stanza, che porta al Complesso XIV a H. 'Ethri (foto A. Graicer).



Fig. 2 - Typical burrows cut through earlier underground facility, converting it into a burrows-junction in Complex XV at H. 'Ethri (photo by Avram Graicer).

Fig. 2 - Tipiche "tane" scavate attraverso una struttura sotterranea pre-esistente, trasformandola in un collegamento tra "tane" nel Complesso XV a H. 'Ethri (foto A. Graicer).

(ESHEL & AMIT 1998).

Throughout ancient Israel, and especially in the Judean Shephelah rock-cut underground chambers were created as part of the economic and physical infrastructure of towns and villages (figs. 5, 6). The hewing technique was refined in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, and the results can be seen in their full magnificence at the Hellenistic site of Maresha (KLONER, 2003). In hundreds of sites throughout the Judean Shephelah, man-made underground facilities have been discovered that fell into disuse when they were linked to form ramified complexes with narrow, winding burrows. Such complexes were first surveyed and documented by the British explorer Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister at Tell Zakariah (Biblical 'Azeqa), Kh. el-'Ein, and Tell Gezer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during excavations of these sites on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund. At the time the connection between the discovery and the Bar Kokhba Revolt was not yet understood (BLISS & MACALISTER, 1902: 204-213, 254-270; KLONER & TEPPER, 1987: 30-36).

Exploration of the hideouts resumed in the 1970s with Yoram Tsafrir's excavations at 'Ein Arub (TSAFRIR & ZISSU, 2002) and David Alon's discovery of hideout complexes in the southern Judean Shephelah; Alon was also the first to point out that such complexes were a widespread phenomenon. After a comprehensive survey in the Judean Shephelah in the late 1970s, Amos Kloner and Yigal Tepper identified the rock-cut complexes of underground chambers and narrow burrows as a phenomenon, and designated it as "Hiding Complexes". In their book *The Hiding Complexes in the Judean Shephelah* (KLONER & TEPPER, 1987), they investigated the significance, scope, and importance of the phenomenon and its historical connection with the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Their conclusions regarding the function, dating, and distribution of the hideouts were a breakthrough in our understanding of the revolt (KLONER, 1983a; 1983b; KLONER & TEPPER, 1987: 361-380). By 2001, protracted research on this subject had

added extensive information on hideout complexes in Judea (KLONER & ZISSU, 2003a, 2003b).

LITERARY SOURCES

We have no comprehensive, first-hand historical work describing the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The writings of Roman authors and the Church Fathers contain a few brief accounts of the revolt, some of which are tendentious and contradict one another. For this reason, the archaeological evidence is of great importance.

The Rabbinical literature contains several references to hiding in caves in connection with the Bar Kokhba Revolt (KLONER & TEPPER, 1987: 378-379; OPPENHEIMER, 1982). These later references, however, have to do with the end of the revolt and the subsequent prohibition of Jewish religious practices, and they almost certainly refer to refuge caves.

According to most scholars, the account by the Roman historian Cassius Dio - in his *Roman History* (69, 12-14; trans. E. Cary), which was preserved in the eleventh-century abridgment by the Byzantine monk Xiphillinus - is a fairly comprehensive and reliable overview of the revolt from a Roman perspective (ECK, 1999).

Aharon Oppenheimer analyzed Cassius Dio's description in the context of the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the suppression of it, distinguishing between two stages of the revolt (OPPENHEIMER, 1980: 9-21). The first part of Dio's account describes how the Jews stored up arms while Hadrian was in the east:

"So long indeed, as Hadrian was close by in Egypt

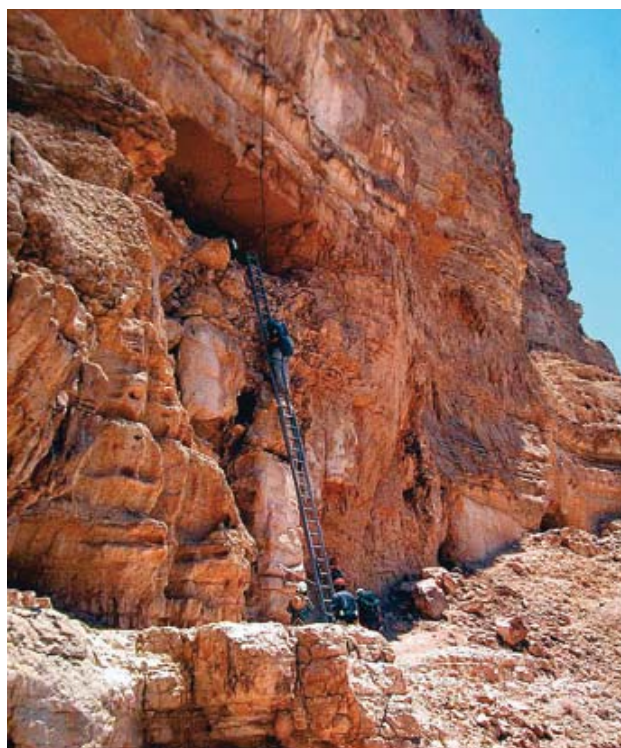


Fig. 3 - Climbing to the Cave of Letters, refuge cave in Nahal Hever, Judean Desert (photo by Boaz Zissu, 2001).

Fig. 3 - Scalata alla Grotta delle Lettere, cavità rifugio a Nahal Hever, Deserto Giudaico (foto B. Zissu, 2001).



Fig. 4 - Cliff and entrances to the refuge caves in Wadi Murraba'at, Judean Desert (photo by B. Zissu).
 Fig. 4 - Falesia ed entrate alle cavità rifugio a Wadi Murraba'at, Deserto Giudaico (foto B. Zissu).

and again in Syria, they remained quiet, save in so far as they purposely made of poor quality such weapons as they were called upon to furnish, in order that the Romans might reject them and they themselves might thus have the use of them;"

Dio attributes the motivation for the Jews' revolt to the conversion of Jerusalem into an idolatrous city, Aelia Capitolina and identifies the timing as when Hadrian left the area. Afterwards he reports on the reinforcement of militarily advantageous sites with fortifications, passages and underground networks, and the rebels' tactic of avoiding head-on clashes with the Roman army:

"To be sure, they [the Jews] did not dare try conclusions with the Romans in the open field, but they occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, in order that they might have places of refuge whenever they should be hard pressed, and might meet together unobserved under ground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light."

According to Kloner, Dio's account is consistent with the finds in hideouts in Judea, which were prepared as secret bases for the rebels (KLONER & TEPPER, 1978: 373-380). A map of hideouts in Judea (fig. 7), also showing the distribution of Jewish settlements and

coins from the revolt, can give us some indication on the geographical extent of the revolt (MOR, 2003). An examination of the archaeological data (ESHEL, 2006: 111-122; ZISSU, 2001; ZISSU & ESHEL, 2002) supports Dio's quantitative report (although the report may be exaggerated) of the large scale destruction of Judean countryside during the suppression of the revolt:

"Very few of them [the Jews] in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine-hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate [...]".

ARCHITECTURE OF THE HIDEOUTS

Typical Architectural Components

Certain architectural components in the hideout complexes constitute distinguishing marks of their function:

Burrows

The burrows link external chambers used previously as cisterns (fig. 8), quarries, ritual immersion baths,

olive presses, storerooms and granaries, stables and rooms for raising animals, *columbaria* (fig. 9), and so on; connecting them made the chambers unusable for their previous function and purposely impaired the local way of life and economy.

The burrows are low and narrow and can only be traversed by walking on all fours, sliding on the knees, or crawling; they tend to be around 0.6-0.7 m wide and 0.7-0.9 high (fig. 10). The burrows bend from time to time at various angles and in some cases the height of the floor changes (fig. 11). Small side chambers were cut out of the walls of the burrows. In the floor of the burrows we find rock-cut openings leading to bell-shaped pits below, which were used for storing grain and other solids or liquids; a stone lid of the right size closed the opening.

Vertical shafts

Shafts were hewn in the complexes for use as entrances or exits. The shafts had locks and their entrances were camouflaged - usually inside a room or courtyard of a house in the aboveground locality (fig. 12). Shafts connecting burrows whose floors were at different heights

were hewn vertically from the top down (figs. 13, 14). It seems that such shafts were essential when the burrows did not meet at the exact same level; the shaft was an operative solution that made it possible to connect the burrows cut on different levels. Depressions were often cut out of opposite walls of the shaft for use as footholds in climbing up or down.

Internal locks

The entrances to rooms and burrows were closed, blocked, or cut off with various kinds of locks, such as a stone slab the same size as the burrow, a large round stone the size of the average opening (fig. 15), beams, and bars. The people hiding would lock the entrance behind them from the inside.

Air vents and openings for light

To prepare a hideout and light lamps inside, one needed ventilation. Vertical shafts were hewn in the ceilings of the rooms for the removal of rubble from the hewing; once the complex was completed, they served as air vents and were camouflaged on the surface. Horizontal burrows cut into the walls of cisterns and other faci-



Fig. 5 - Columbarium chamber at H. Tabaq. The original entrance to this facility, hewn during the Second Temple period, was blocked. Burrows cut two of its walls, and the columbarium turned into an underground shelter during the Bar Kokhba revolt (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 5 - Ambiente colombario a H. Tabaq. L'entrata originale a questa struttura, scavata durante il periodo del Secondo Tempio, venne bloccata. Delle "tane" tagliano due delle pareti, e il colombario fu trasformato in un rifugio sotterraneo durante la rivolta di Bar Kokhba (foto B. Zissu).

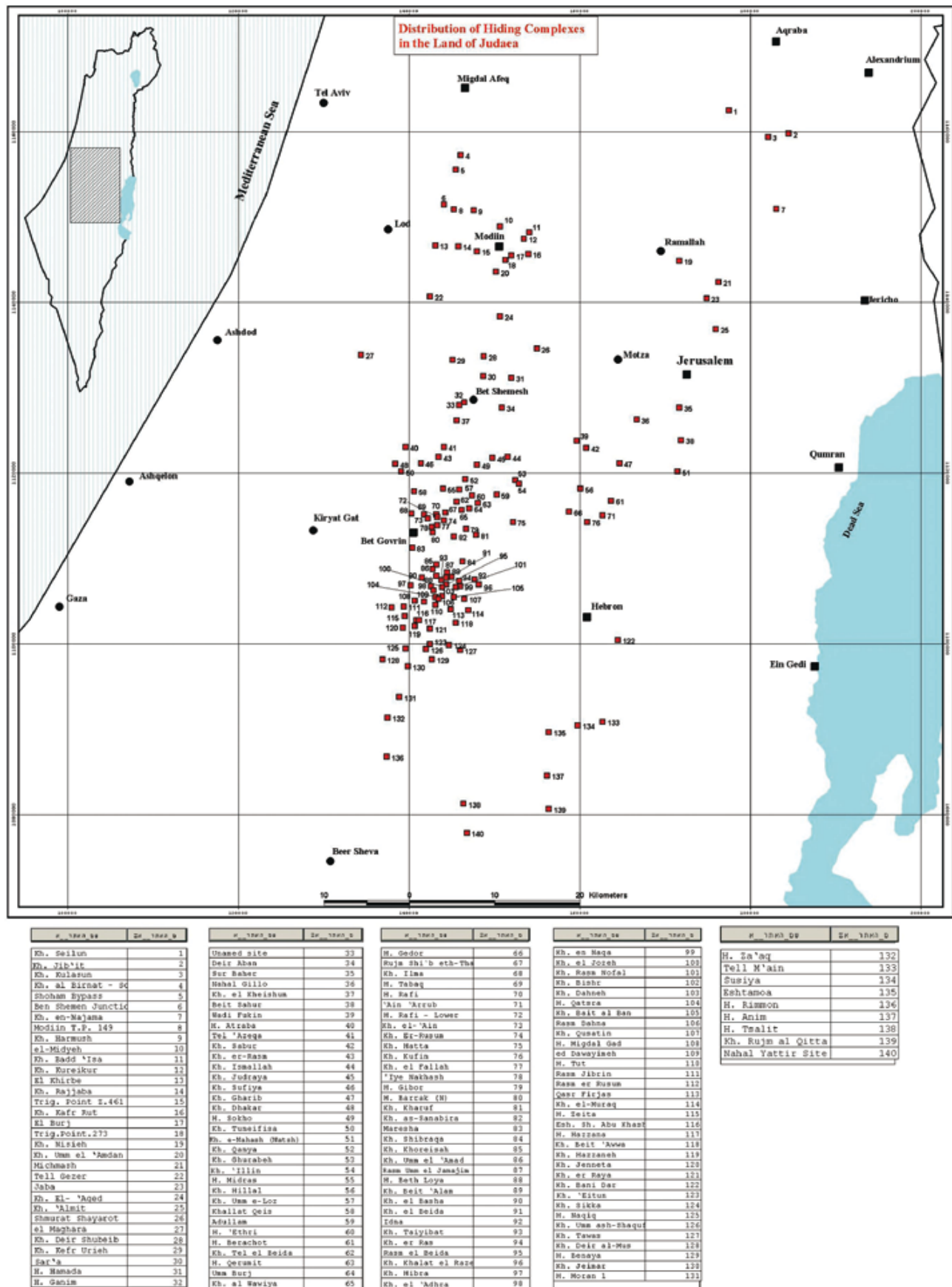


Fig. 7 - Distribution map of hiding complexes in Judaea (prepared by L. Barda, IAA).

Fig. 7 - Carta della distribuzione dei sistemi di nascondigli nella Giudea (grafica L. Barda, IAA).

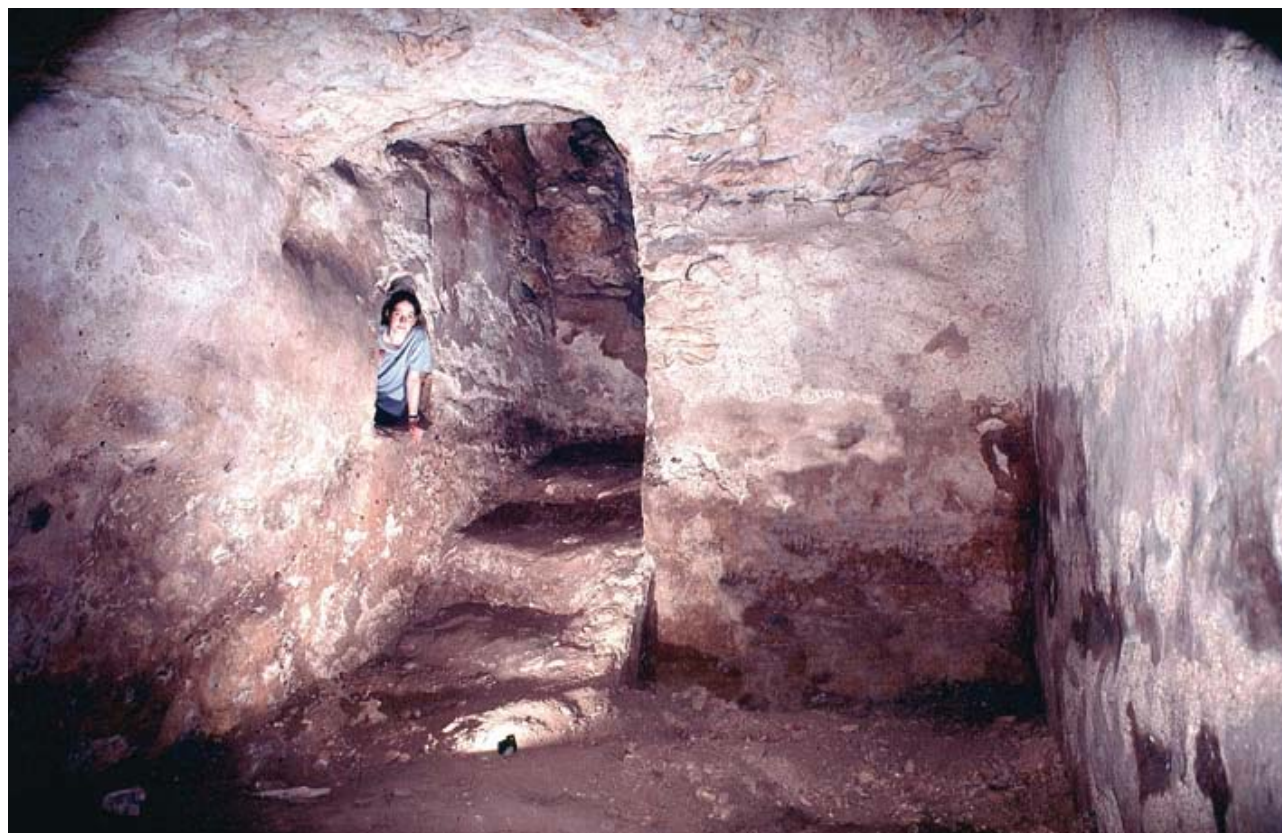


Fig. 8 - Water cistern at H. 'Ethri. The original entrance to the Hellenistic period' cistern was blocked. Burrows cut two of its walls, and the cistern was transformed into a shelter within hiding complex XV (photo by Ory Ainy).

Fig. 8 - Cisterna a H. 'Ethri. L'entrata originale alla cisterna del periodo ellenistico venne bloccata. Le "tane" tagliano due delle pareti, e la cisterna fu trasformata in un rifugio all'interno del sistema di nascondigli XV (foto O. Ainy).

which can be sorted into two main groups (KLONER & ZISSU, 2003a: 183-186):

1. Family complexes were of three main types: storage complexes (fig. 17); hideout and storage complexes; and complexes for hiding and storage with water facilities (fig. 18). A family complex would be hewn underneath a house or yard; access was via a vertical shaft whose upper entrance was hidden or camouflaged. From the bottom of the shaft, burrows led to underground storerooms that could be used for food storage and hiding. Some of the family hideouts were connected to cisterns, so the people could remain in hiding for a long time.

2. Public complexes were of various types, including simple public complexes (fig. 19), public hideout complexes (figs. 20, 21), escape routes connected to public buildings, and complexes incorporating large natural chambers. In the public complexes, pre-existing underground rock-cut facilities were connected by means of branched burrows and their original function was eliminated. The public complexes had several camouflaged entrances, generally in houses at some distance from one another. They generally contained a cistern for use by the people hiding; this reflects an organized, professional effort by the local population. The public complexes had room for dozens of people; the largest

could hold even more. There were also escape routes leading from these complexes out of the locality.

The Herodium tunnels are unique in that their shape and the dimensions of the passages enable a person to walk upright (fig. 22). The tunnels were carved deep into the mountain, putting Herod's mountain fortress' cisterns out of use and turning them into underground junctions. The tunnels enabled large numbers of people to move around easily and unseen underground, and they seem to have had a defensive-offensive military function. The excavators, NETZER & ARAZI (1985) dated them to the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

DATING OF THE HIDING COMPLEXES

Unfortunately, antiquities looters often find ancient villages, caves, and underground complexes and plunder them before archaeologists arrive. Many hideout complexes were looted systematically and with great skill for decades, sometimes with the aid of metal detectors. Caves that remained in use in later periods were cleared of objects that the later inhabitants did not need. Only the few complexes that archaeologists found sealed can be dated by their content, although the absence of dated finds as pottery, oil lamps, glass vessels, etc. (fig. 23) in undisturbed contexts (i.e., rooms and facilities that were not excavated by antiquities thieves) hinders

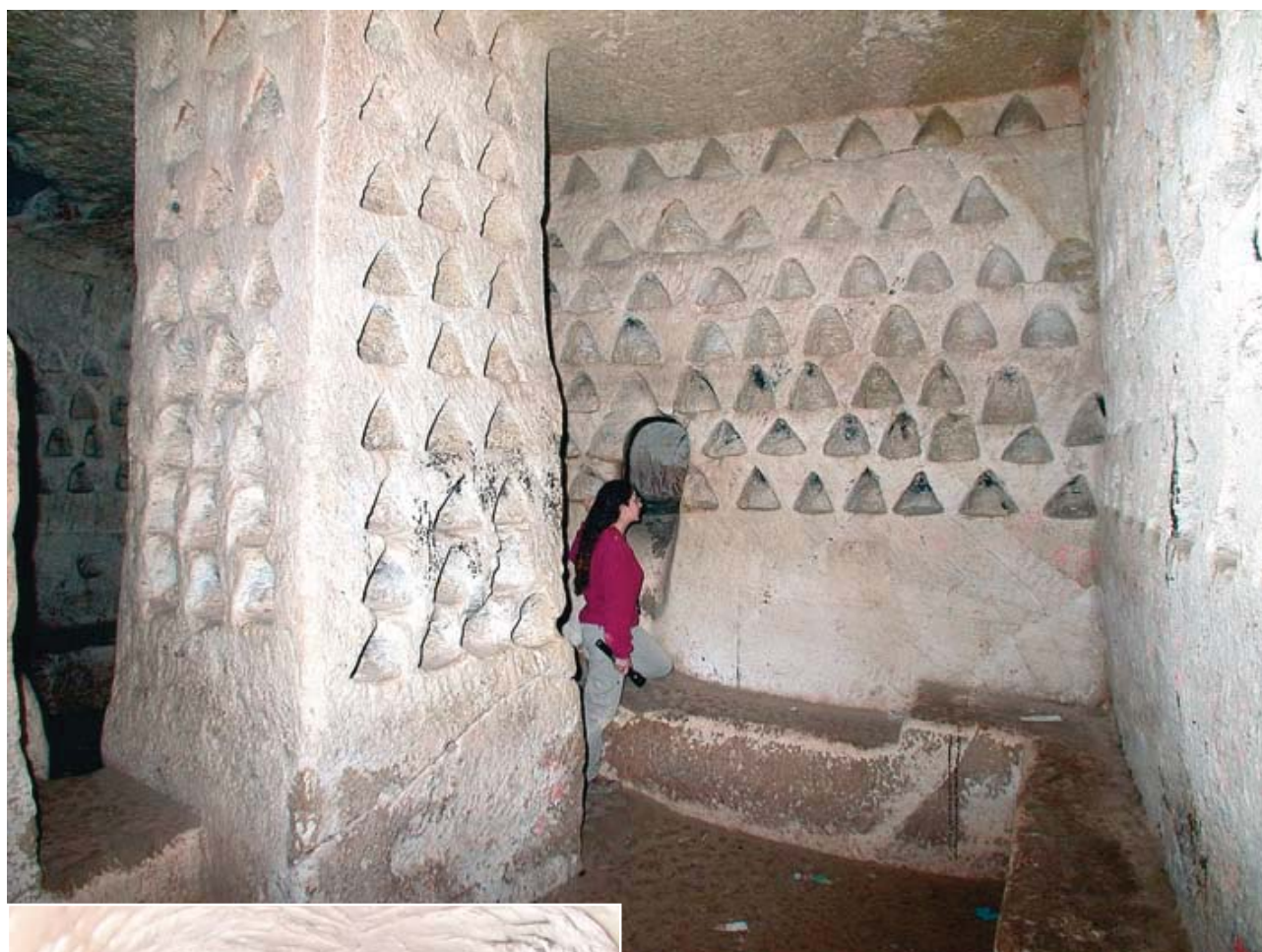


Fig. 9 - Burrow cuts wall of columbarium at H. Tabaq (see also fig. 5 above). The original entrance was blocked (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 9 - Una "tana" taglia la parete di un colombario a H. Tabaq (vedi anche la fig. 5). L'entrata originale è stata bloccata (foto B. Zissu).



Fig. 10 - A typical burrow at the H. Tabaq columbarium (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 10 - Una tipica "tana" nel colombario a H. Tabaq (foto B. Zissu).

the accurate dating of the hideout phenomenon.

Kloner came up with a relative chronology for the hideout complexes that distinguishes older underground complexes and facilities with prior functions from burrows, shafts, and air vents added around the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. When no clear chronology can be determined, burrows of the typical dimensions and shape are used as an archaeological indicator for identifying them as hideouts used during the revolt. In the 20 years since the publication of KLONER & TEPPER'S book (1987), a great deal of evidence has been discovered that enables us to date the hideout phenomenon more accurately.

It seems that the hideouts reached their peak of sophistication during the Bar Kokhba Revolt; this claim is supported by objects discovered in the complexes, such as 25 coins found by excavators at various sites (fig. 24); (for a summary of coins and their sites, see ZISSU & ESHEL, 2002)¹ and a lead weight issued by the Bar Kokhba administration (fig. 25; KLONER, 1990), as well as potsherds, fragments of glass, and oil-lamps. Nevertheless, recent research has found indications of

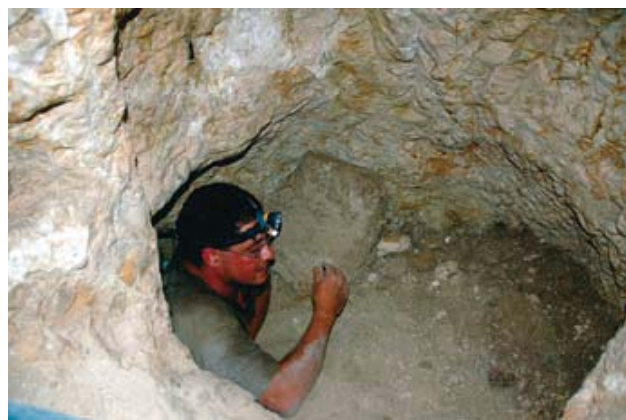


Fig. 11 - Burrow that changes its level at H. Beth Shana, exposing the head of the intruder (photo by Amit Dagan).

Fig. 11 - Una "tana" che cambia di livello a H. Beth Shana, esponendo la testa dell'intruso (foto A. Dagan).

small, unsophisticated complexes from the beginning of the first century C.E. and perhaps even earlier (at Pisgat Ze'ev [SHUKRON & SAVARIEGO, 1994]; H. 'Ehtri [ZISSU & GANOR, 2001]).² But numismatic finds from the time of the Jewish War against the Romans have also been discovered in hideout XIII at H. 'Ethri (half a sheqel from the third year of the Jewish War), at Susya (a sheqel from the second year of the Jewish War [SAR-ABI & ESHEL 1998]) and at Kh. Zeita (a hoard of 755 perutot from the second and third years of the Jewish War [KINDLER, 2003–06]).³

THE FUNCTION OF THE HIDING COMPLEXES

Because the presence of hiding complexes in the Judean Shephelah is consistent with and corroborates Cassius Dio's account, they can reasonably be dated to the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt. The Roman historian's description should not be interpreted as an exaggeration meant to excuse the difficulty the Romans had in suppressing the revolt. The hideouts are tangible evidence of preparations for a revolt or for actions during the revolt, so that clandestine activity could be carried out when necessary. We should not assume that all the hideout complexes in the Judean Shephelah were hewn in the midst of the revolt; they were apparently cut earlier in preparation for it.

The architectural uniformity among many of the complexes seems to be evidence of orders from above, plan-



Fig. 12 - Entrance shafts to hiding complex XIII in room T3 at H. 'Ethri. The openings were sealed with closing slabs (photo by A. Graicer).

Fig. 12 - Pozzi di entrata al sistema di rifugio XIII, nella stanza T3 a H. 'Ethri. Le aperture vennero sigillate con lastre di chiusura (foto A. Graicer).

ning, and implementation in one short period of time, as a result of the military conception of the Bar Kokhba administration. Perhaps preparing the hideouts was part of the civilian population's role in getting ready for revolt, subversive activity, and hiding in various stages of the war. Creating the hiding complexes was a sophisticated way of overcoming the difficulty of a head-on clash with the Roman legions. The complexes were meant to serve as hideouts for weeks or even months and as bases for the rebels. Food, weapons, and other supplies could be stored there secretly.

The small, narrow, winding burrows were meant to

¹ We cannot rule out the possibility that some of the hoards mentioned by Leo Mildenberg in his book originate in hideout complexes looted since the late 1960s. The hoards were named for the village of origin of the thieves and merchants who reported them to him (MILDENBERG 1984: 49–57); their exact place of discovery is unknown.

² At H. 'Ethri in the central Judean Shephelah, small hideout complexes (e.g., complexes VI and IV in fig. 6) were found. These contain typical components of hideouts: narrow, winding passages with floors at various heights, small rooms, camouflage arrangements, and means of blocking entry. The small complexes at H. 'Ethri were hewn in the early first century CE when the houses above them were built. The complexes were used in the Jewish War, as evidenced by a half-sheqel coin from year 3 of the revolt found in one of them. Several complexes ceased functioning when parts of the site were destroyed during the Jewish War.

³ For a summary of the numismatic finds in the hideout complexes, including additional evidence of the use of components of complexes prior to the Bar Kokhba Revolt, see Kloner and Zissu 2003a.

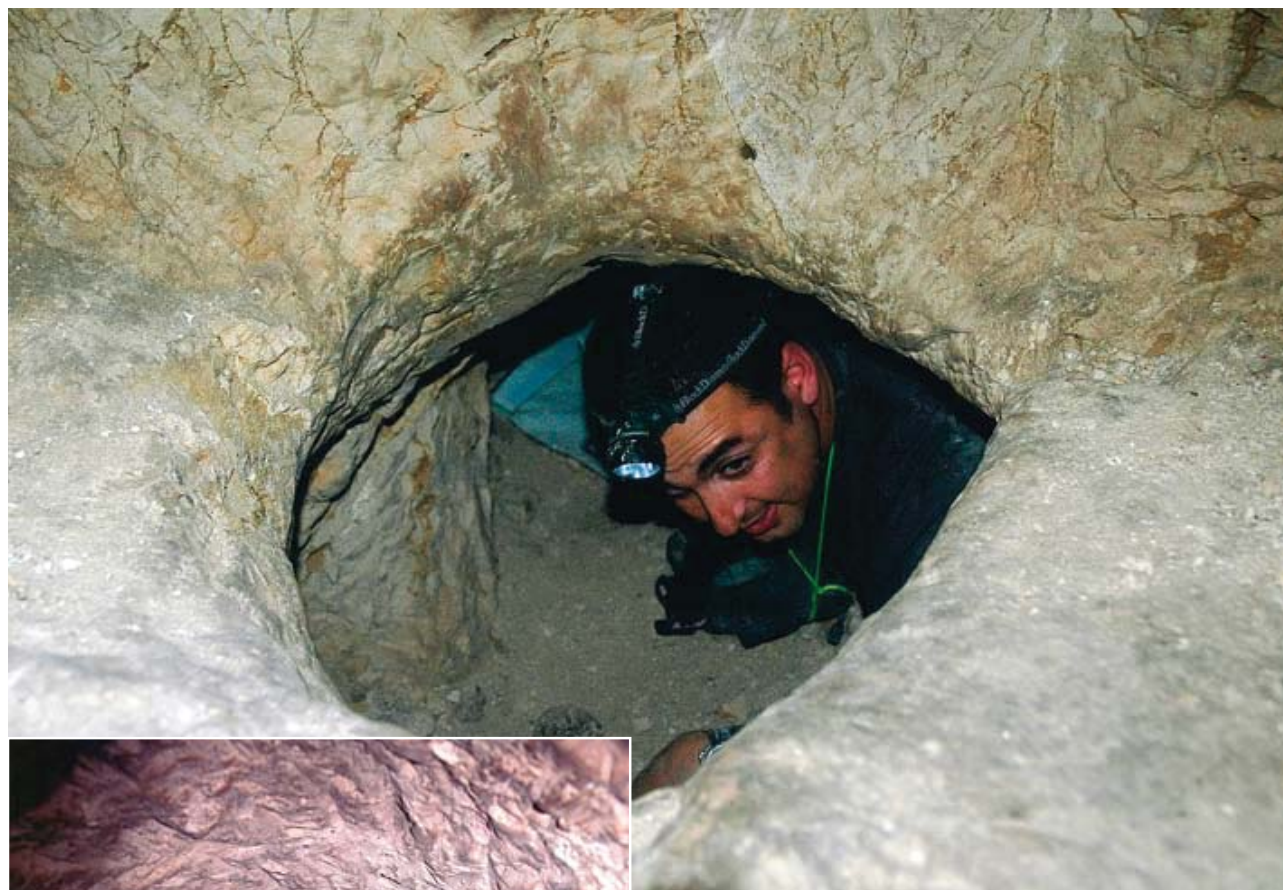


Fig. 14 - Vertical shaft along burrow at H. Beth Shana, aimed at exposing the intruder (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 14 - Pozzo verticale lungo una "tana" a H. Beth Shana, avente lo scopo di esporre un eventuale intruso (foto B. Zissu).

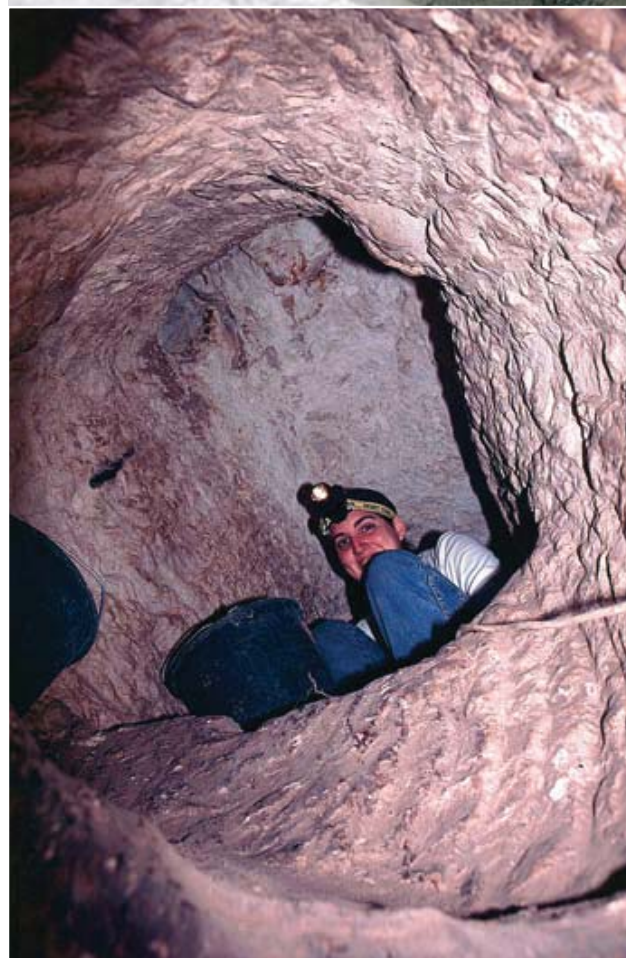


Fig. 13 - Vertical shaft connecting between two burrows, cut at different levels, within complex XIV at H. 'Ethri. Photo from bottom of shaft to its upper part (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 13 - Pozzo verticale che collega due "tane", scavate a livelli differenti, nel sistema XIV a H. 'Ethri. Fotografia dal fondo del pozzo verso l'alto (foto B. Zissu).

make it difficult for the enemy to infiltrate and advance in the underground maze. The burrows could be blocked and locked easily and efficiently, and parts of the complex could be cut off from the outside. An individual Roman soldier bearing arms and a lamp would have a hard time advancing on all fours or dragging himself along the ground in an unfamiliar burrow or moving through the vertical shafts, and he would be in an inferior, vulnerable position compared with the rebel lying in ambush for him. The shafts were designed to hinder or even stop movement along the burrows by changing the floor level, and they could easily be stopped up with rocks. Therefore an enemy would have to fight one on one, losing the advantage of the trained military unit formed with frontal combat in mind.

HIDEOUTS IN THE TALMUD

Several *halakhic* passages in the talmudic literature mention hideouts that served as long-term places of refuge for women and children from the time the locality was captured until the enemy left it. As we can see from these passages, the hideouts were safe and better hidden than just a pit or storeroom, and the likelihood of discovery by the enemy was low.

1. M Ketubot 2:9: *"If troops of siege have taken a town, all the priests' wives who are in it are unfit. If they have witnesses, even a slave, even a handmaid, they are believed. No one is believed as to himself."* The Babylonian Talmud notes an exception to this law: *"If there is there one hiding place, it protects all priests' wives"* (Ketubot 27a, Soncino translation). Elchanan SAMET (1986) explains that the concern in the Mishnah is that the troops may have raped the women; consequently, the priests' wives are forbidden to their husbands by the Torah. The Amoraim added that if there is even "one hiding place" in that city, the women may remain with their husbands. Samet regards the "hiding place" as a known place where it was planned that women and others would hide during a war and the conquest of the city.

2. M Niddah 4:7: *"But if the time of her fixed period was come and she had not examined herself, she is de-*

med unclean. R. Meir says: If she was in hiding and the time of her fixed period was come and she had not examined herself she may be deemed clean, since fearfulness suspends the blood-flow" (Danby translation). R. Meir disagrees with the original law in a case in which the woman was in a hiding place and was tense and afraid. Samet believes that the opinion of R. Meir, who lived at the time of the revolt, reflects a situation that was familiar to him - hiding and the fear that went along with it. Even in hiding, the Jews were careful to observe the laws of ritual purity.

3. T Yebamot 12:4, 5: In a discussion of levirate marriage and halitza, hideouts are mentioned three times. The context concerns two women who gave birth in hiding; the children were mixed up and no one knew which woman was the mother of which infant. Samet presumes that these accounts refer to a hideout where the women stayed for some time and could give birth. This

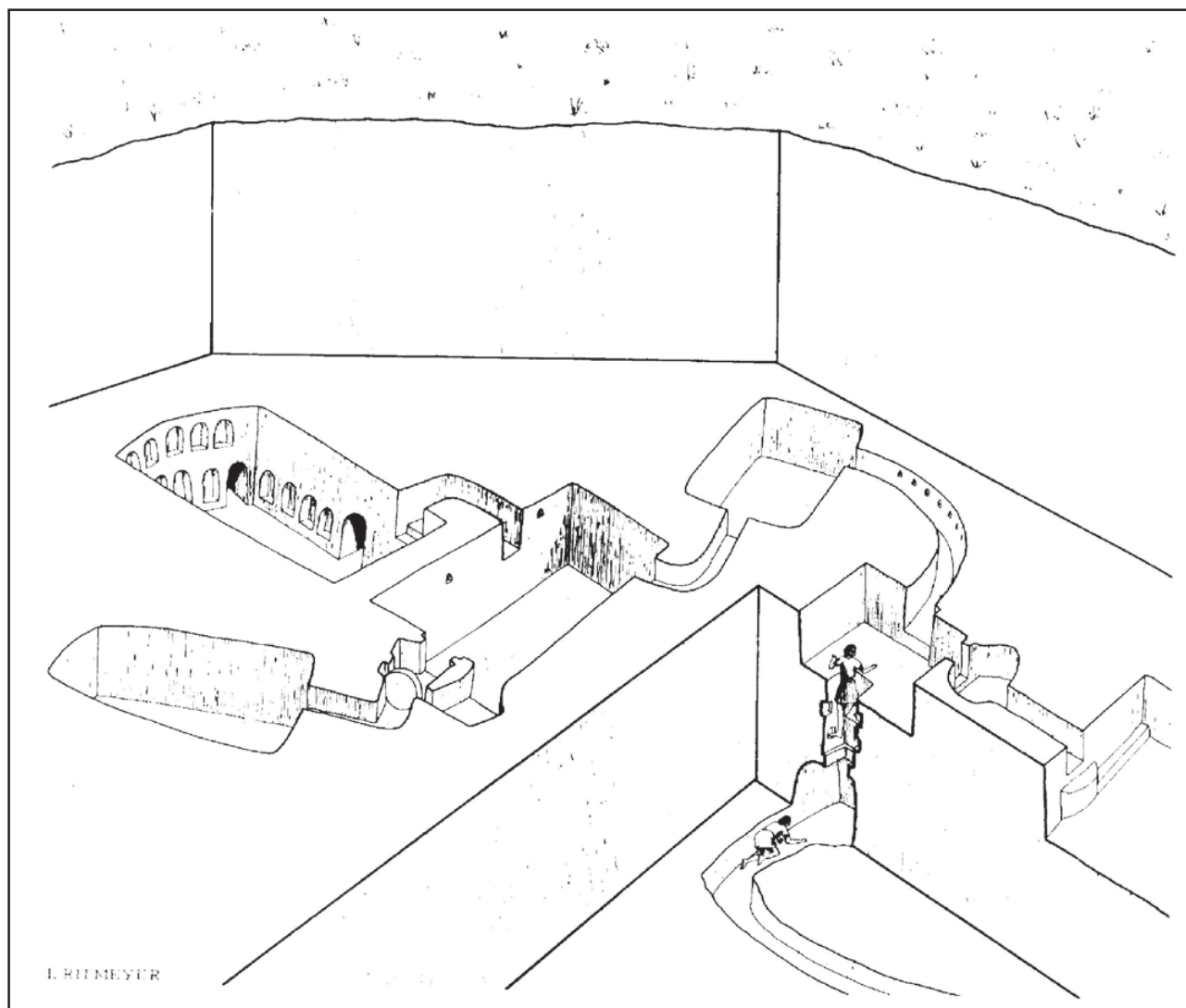


Fig. 15 - Axionometric cutting through different levels at the H. 'Eitun' hiding system. Notice the round blocking stone, storage room with large niches in its walls, niches for oil lamps in side of burrow and shaft with climbing indentations (drawing by Leen Ritmeyer).

Fig. 15 - Sezione assonometrica attraverso più livelli del sistema di nascondigli a H. 'Eitun. Notare la pietra rotonda di blocco, la stanza magazzino con grandi nicchie alle pareti, le nicchie per le lampade a olio dentro la "tana" e il pozzo con le pedarole (disegno Leen Ritmeyer).

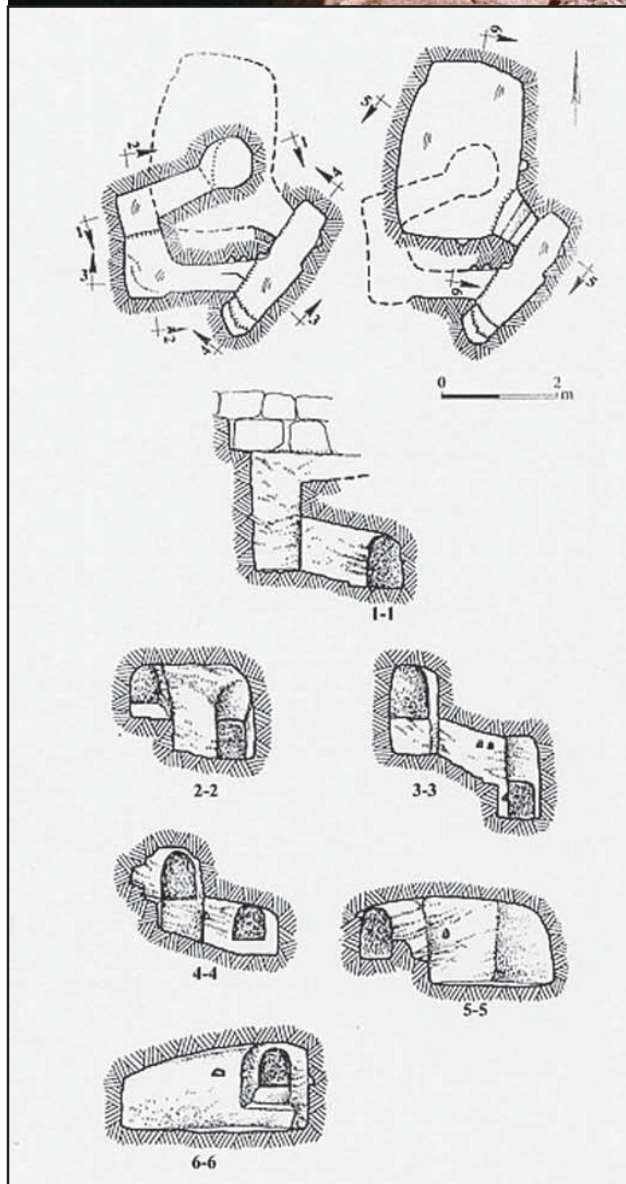


Fig. 16 - Water cistern at H. Tannim. The original entrance to the cistern, apparently hewn during the first century C.E., was blocked. A burrow cuts the upper part of one of its walls, and the cistern was used for collecting water secretly (photo by Ory Ainy).

Fig. 16 - Cisterna a H. Tannim. L'entrata originale della cisterna, apparentemente scavata nel primo secolo d.C., venne bloccata. Una "tana" taglia la parte superiore di una delle pareti, e la cisterna venne usata per raccogliere acqua di nascosto (foto O. Ainy).

sounds like a hideout complex, where newborns could be mixed up due to crowding, darkness, and fear.

Samet believes that during the preparations for the Bar Kokhba Revolt or during the revolt itself, the Jews developed a concept of defense and hiding; the historical context of the exceptions to the law stated by the Mishnah regarding a besieged city is consistent with the time of the revolt. Physically and functionally, the talmudic "hiding place" is identical to a hideout complex: both are within a town or village, they are not

Fig. 17 - Plans (or two horizontal sections) and six vertical sections through system IV, hewn beneath room K5 at H. 'Ethri (drawing by Kornfeld, IAA).

Fig. 17 - Piante (due sezioni orizzontali) e sei sezioni verticali del sistema IV, scavato sotto la stanza K5 a H. 'Ethri (disegno di Kornfeld, IAA).

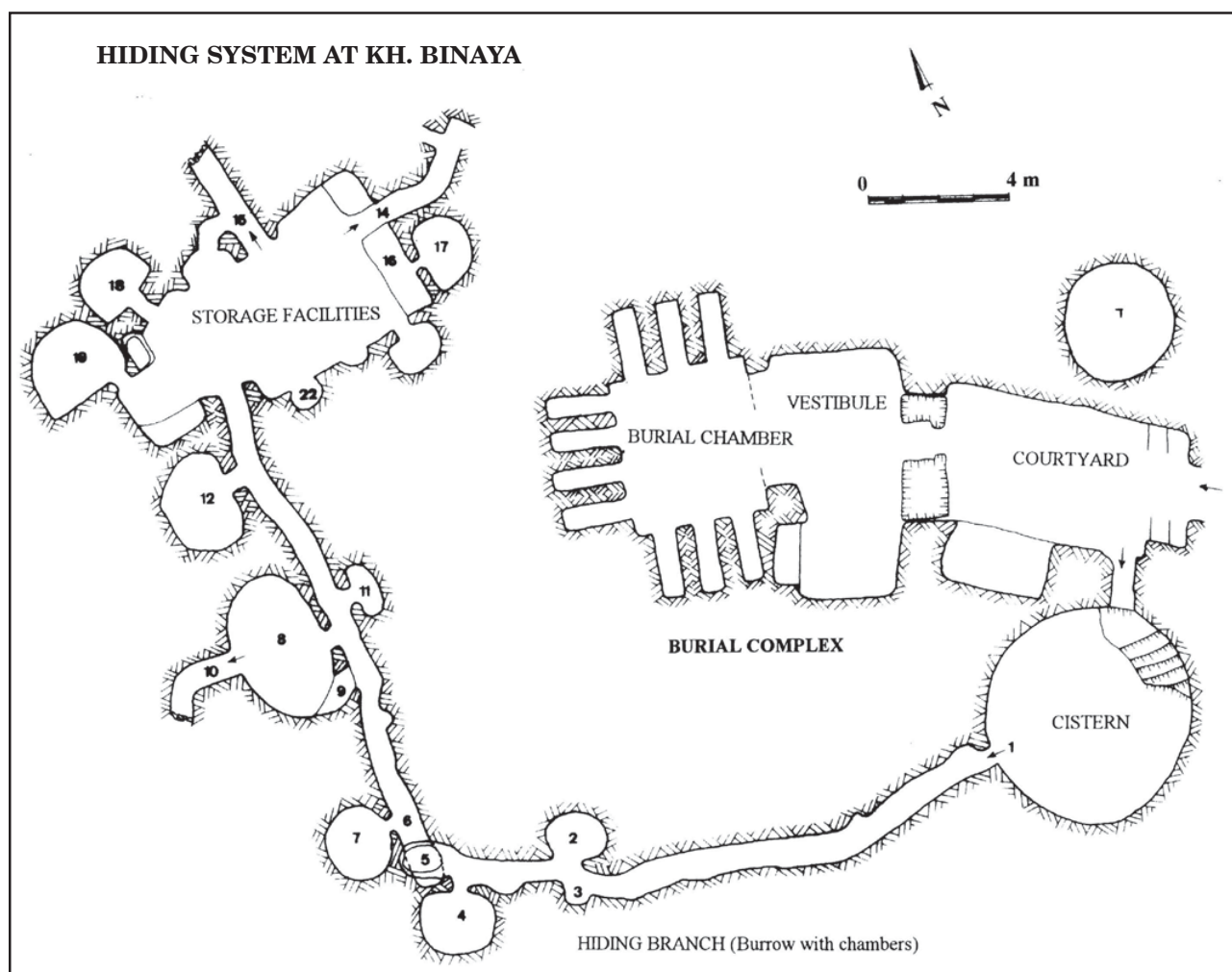


Fig. 18 - Plan of hiding complex at Kh. Binaya; the complex includes a cistern, a typical burrow with small storage chambers and a larger shelter or storage facility. The complex is connected to the courtyard of a burial cave – an outstanding feature (drawing by T. Krinkin-Fabian).

Fig. 18 - Pianta del sistema di nascondigli a Kh. Binaya; il complesso include una cisterna, una tipica "tana" con piccoli ambienti magazzino e un grande rifugio o struttura di immagazzinaggio. Il sistema è collegato al cortile di una cavità sepolcrale - una caratteristica fuori dal comune (disegno T. Krinkin-Fabian).

suited for combat inside them and are intended for non-belligerents, their rooms are small and dark, they are crowded, and there is a lack of privacy. If the town was conquered, the people hiding were beset by fear and emotional stress.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE HIDEOUT COMPLEXES IN JUDEA

Most of the hideout complexes were discovered underneath Jewish localities from the late Second Temple period and the time between the revolts. They were identified by means of distinctly Jewish archaeological finds such as ritual baths, stone vessels, ossuaries, Judean ("southern") lamps, coins from the Jewish War and Bar Kokhba Revolt, and Hebrew *ostraca* (ZISSU, 2001).

The complexes were generally made by local residents who had knowledge, experience, and a long tradition of hewing. The idea was not a foreign import; it was a physical manifestation of the preparation of an entire

region for revolt, keeping in mind local conditions, the quality of the rock, and the military conception of the leadership of the revolt. The hiding complexes in the Judean Shephelah were hewn under an upper layer of *nari* (harder crust) in the soft limestone (*kirton* rock), which is stable and easy to hew. Those in the northern Negev were hewn in limestone conglomerate. The ones in the Hebron hills are in hard limestone and those in the Binyamin region and the Shephelah of Lod are in a friable limestone that is less stable than that of the southern areas of the Judean Shephelah. The complexes were created on farms and estates, in villages, and at fortified sites scattered throughout Judea, not necessarily controlling main roads.

Surveys and excavations in recent years have increased the number of known hiding complexes and expanded the map of their distribution. Today we know of more than 320 complexes in more than 125 Jewish localities, concentrated in the area from Nahal Shilo in the north to Nahal Shiqma in the south, and from the *Telem* valley in the east to the slopes of the Shephelah in the

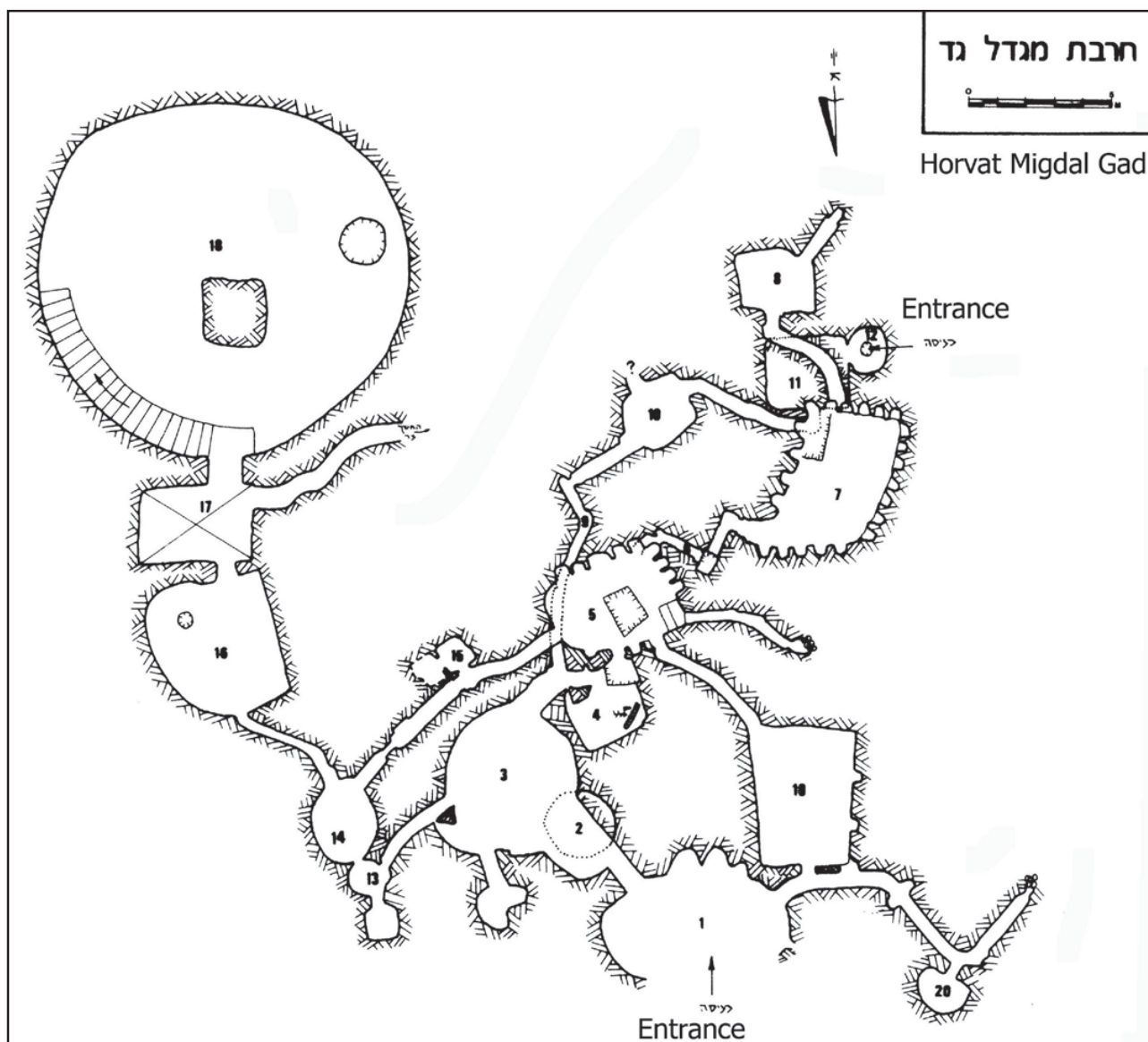


Fig. 19 - A public hiding complex at H. Migdal-Gad (drawing by Yair Tzoran)

Fig. 19 - Un sistema di nascondigli pubblico a H. Migdal-Gad (disegno Y. Tzoran).

west. In view of the latest finds, we can delineate the boundaries of the settlement bloc in Judea between the revolts against Rome: from Antipatris in the northwest; eastward via Nahal Shilo, the toparchy of Aqraba, and the Alexandrion fortress (Sartaba); then south along the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea and west to the area of Arad, Aro'er, and the Beersheba valley. The line of settlements in the west extends to the fringes of the Judean Shephelah where it meets the Coastal Plain. So far no hiding complexes with typical burrows have been discovered in non-Jewish localities.

HIDING COMPLEXES IN THE GALILEE

Yuval Shachar studied the hideout complexes discovered in 23 Galilee localities. Nineteen of these are in the Lower Galilee, including a few near Roman roads. Four were found in the Upper Galilee (SHACHAR, 2003). In addition to those on Shachar's list is a complex discove-

red by Motti Aviam in Yodefot (AVIAM, 2005: 48-51, 129-130).⁴ This small complex contains a tunnel about two meters long and three small rooms. The entrance shaft to the complex was hewn in a casemate room's floor in the western wall of the site; the entrance faces east, i.e., into the locality (area VII, casemate room RC6). Human bones and a hoard of 25 coins from the first century CE (the latest of them from 64 CE) were found in the complex. It is not clear on what basis Aviam concluded that "a small casemate room was planned here in advance in an attempt to establish an underground complex of hideouts underneath." Although the excavation of the complex is not yet complete, it seems that this is a small family complex of a type familiar from

⁴ For an initial summary of Aviam's work in 1983 and a partial update, see Aviam 2004.

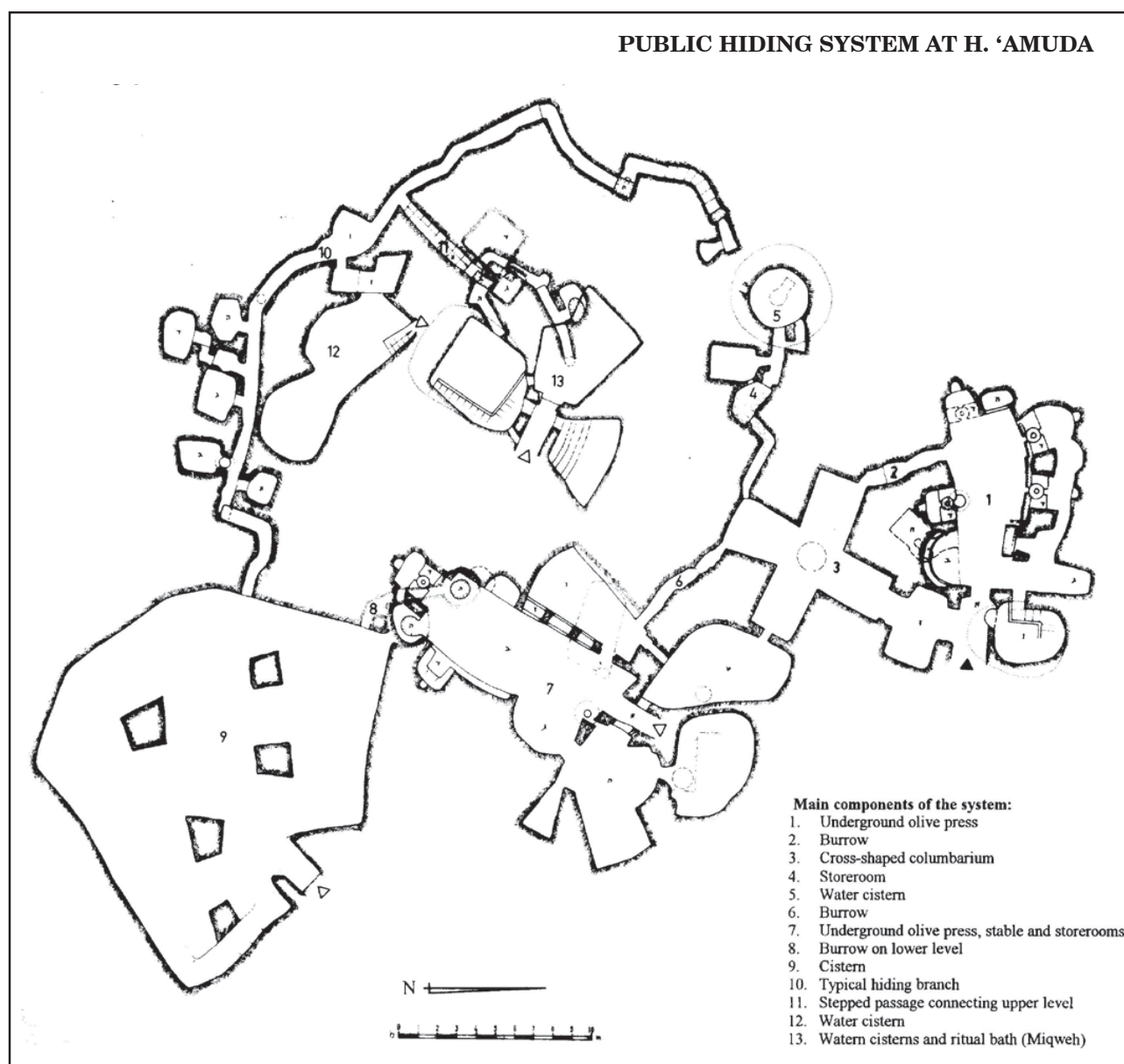


Fig. 20 - Public hiding system at H. 'Amuda; This complex contains earlier facilities as and underground olive press, stables, columbaria, storerooms, ritual baths, cisterns, and a limestone stone quarry. These were interconnected by a network of burrows on several levels (drawing by Giora Solar).

Fig. 20 - Sistema di nascondigli pubblico a H. 'Amuda. Questo complesso contiene strutture precedenti come una pressa sotterranea per olive, stalle, colombari, magazzini, bagni rituali, cisterne, e una cava di calcare. Tutto venne interconnesso da una rete di "tane" su vari livelli (disegno G. Solar).

Judea.

Shachar points out the typological similarity between the complexes in the Galilee and those in Judea, which ostensibly suggests preparations for the Bar Kokhba Revolt. However, the few published archaeological finds from Galilee complexes have not been dated to the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Based on these data, Shachar believes that the Jews of the Galilee intended to revolt just like the Judeans. Nevertheless, the Galilee does not seem to have been included in the Bar Kokhba administration, as indicated by the total absence of Bar Kokhba coins in the Galilee.

In Shachar's opinion, the difference between Judea

and the Galilee was that the center of the revolt was in Judea. After all, the motive for the war, as expressed in the war slogan "For the freedom of Jerusalem," directed the rebels' offensive toward Judea and Jerusalem.

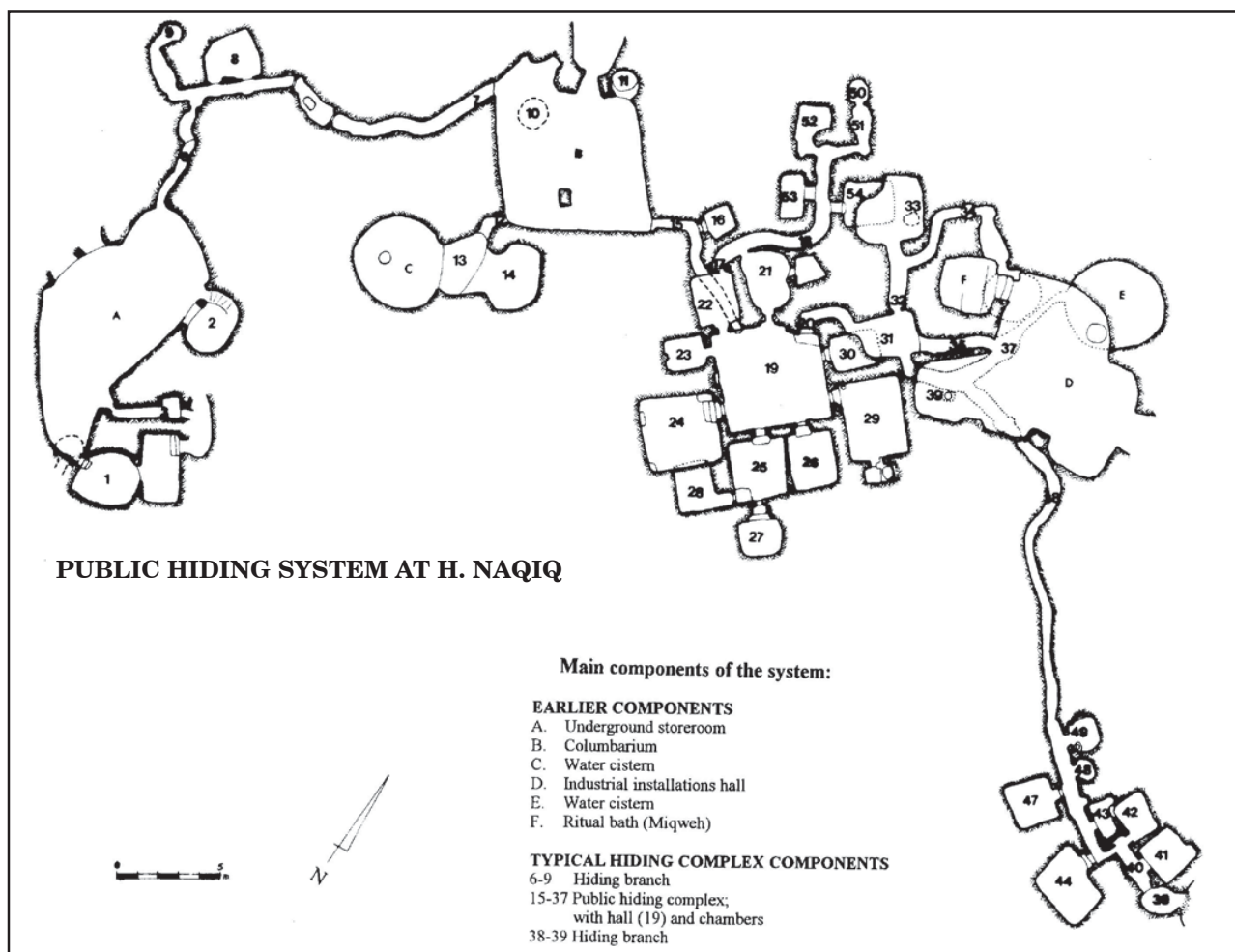


Fig. 21 - Plan of public hiding complex at H. Naqiq. Most of the components of this complex were originally hewn for hiding purposes (surveyed by Yigal Tepper and Yuval Shahar).

Fig. 21 - Pianta di un sistema di nascondigli pubblico a H. Naqiq. La maggior parte delle sue componenti furono scavate in origine come nascondiglio (indagine di Yigal Tepper e Yuval Shahar).

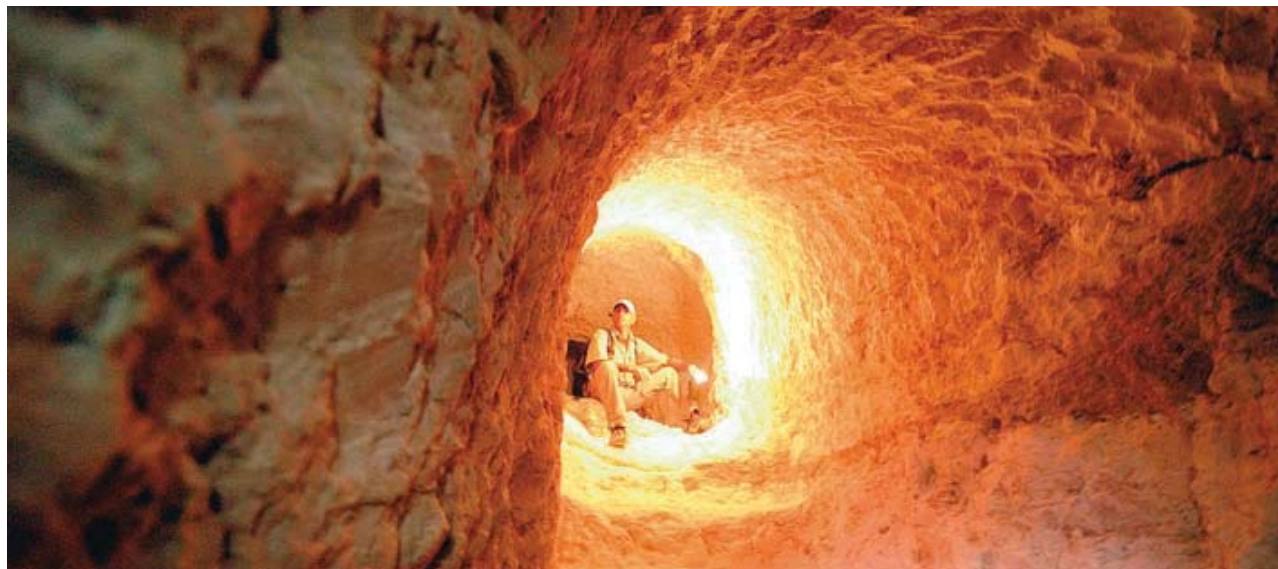


Fig. 22 - Tunnel at Herodium, the palace-fortress-burial monument built by Herod the Great and later converted into a headquarter during the Bar Kokhba revolt. The tunnels are unique in their shape and dimensions, allowing fighters to walk upright (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 22 - Tunnel a Herodium, il palazzo-fortezza-sepolcro costruito da Erode il Grande e poi trasformato in quartier generale durante la rivolta di Bar Kokhba. I tunnel sono unici per forma e dimensioni, permettendo ai combattenti di camminare eretti (foto B. Zissu).



Fig. 23 - Oil-Lamps found in hiding complexes at H. 'Ethri. No. 1 is a Judean mould-made lamp typical to the years preceding the Bar Kokhba revolt and the revolt itself; Nos. 2, 3 are wheel-made and knife pared oil lamps typical to the first century C.e. Some of these lamps remained in use until the Bar Kokhba revolt (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 23 - Lampade a olio ritrovate nei sistemi di nascondigli a H. 'Ethri. La No.1 è una lampada a stampo giudea, tipica degli anni precedenti la rivolta di Bar Kokhba, e della rivolta stessa; le No. 2 e 3 sono lampade fatte al tornio e lisciate col coltello, tipiche del primo secolo E.C.. Alcune di queste lampade rimasero in uso fino alla rivolta di Bar Kokhba (foto B. Zissu).



Fig. 24 - Photo of bronze coin from year one of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (obverse shows a palm tree and the inscription "El'azar the Priest"; reverse shows a bunch of grapes surrounded by the inscription "Year One of the Freedom of Israel" (photo by B. Zissu).

Fig. 24 - Fotografia di una moneta di bronzo del primo anno della rivolta di Bar Kokhba (di fronte, una palma e l'iscrizione "El'azar il Sacerdote" e sul retro un grappolo d'uva circondato dall'iscrizione "Primo anno della libertà di Israele" (foto B. Zissu).

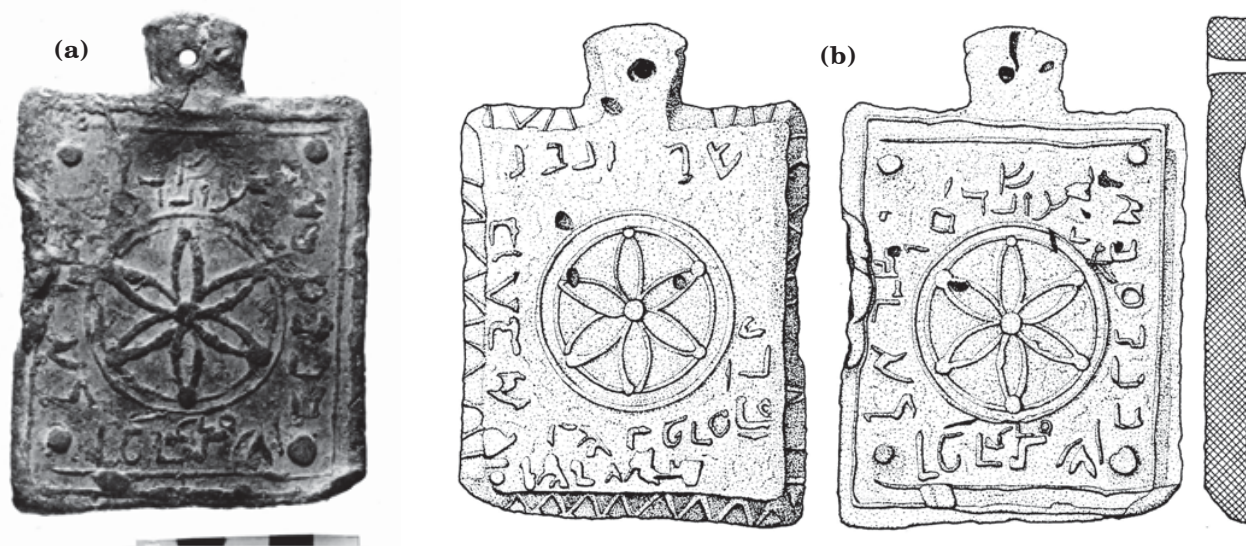


Fig. 25 - (a) Photo and (b) drawing of a lead weight of the Bar Kokhba administration found in the hiding complex at H. 'Alim. The Hebrew text on side B reads: "Shim'on ben Kosba, Prince of Israel and his administrator" (photo by T. Sagiv).

Fig. 25 - (a) Fotografia e (b) disegno di un peso in piombo dell'amministrazione di Bar Kokhba, ritrovato nel sistema di nascondigli a H. 'Alim. Il testo ebraico sul lato B recita: "Shim'on ben Kosba, Principe d'Israele e il suo amministratore" (foto T. Sagiv).

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