Masada, the Human Remains: An Anthropological[i] Critique

Masada, known throughout the western world for the suicide narrative described by Josephus and later excavations by Professor Yigal Yadin,[1] is not without controversy. Outside the academic world, few are aware of the controversy surrounding Masada; however, scholars have long questioned the veracity of the narrative and its interpretation by Yadin. Unfortunately, few scholars have subjected the narrative to rigorous anthropological research, the basis upon which the final Masada drama rests. Professor Amnon Ben-Tor, who excavated Masada, has attempted to summarize the archaeological along with the anthropological findings for a wider public audience. However honest his attempt, the anthropological findings strongly suggest that nearly all, if not all of the human remains found to date, are ethnically non-Jewish.

By Joe Zias
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Back to Masada, the recent publication by Amnon Ben-Tor, is a Hebrew and English translation of a volume about Yadin's excavations atop Masada: an essential contribution to the archaeology of the region (Ben-Tor 2009).[ii] Even though Yadin never published the finalized scientific report of the excavation, the final publication, eight volumes to date and published in large part by his colleagues and those who actively participated in the excavations (1963-65), constitutes the basis for Ben-Tor's summary. The monograph is thus crucial for both the layperson and scholar alike.

Ben-Tor, who along with the late N. Avigad and Joseph Aviram, is a trustee of Yadin's extensive literary legacy and an important source for those three years. He, as a young student of archaeology, participated in the excavations and wrote: "… were the best years of my life" (2009, 1). In the foreword, Ben-Tor cites eleven scholars whom he turned to while writing the monograph for scholarly review and necessary corrections, rare and commendable in today's world of archaeological research. Unfortunately, Ben-Tor never consulted with any

[1] Professor Yadin's first name appears at times, both as Yagal, Yigeal, and Yigal. I prefer the latter spelling.

physical anthropologist over the question of the human skeletal remains recovered atop Masada: one of the most important and controversial questions as to what happened in the final years 73/74 CE.[2] Moreover, Ben-Tor refers to the fact that his anthropological research is primarily based on the final reports of Zias and cites only two since he did not read the other ***three*** publications where valuable information was reported and updated accordingly with new findings. (see references)

However honest his attempt to reconcile the final suicide of the Zealots as related by Josephus with Yadin's interpretation, his work is riddled with errors because he failed to consult with physical anthropologists. It is clear from the outset that Ben-Tor, a student of Yadin, attempted to validate Yadin's interpretation of Masada (1966) which has come under criticism over the years by others and me (Ben-Yehuda 2002; Cohen 1982; Zias 1998, 2007). Somewhat earlier, even I had succumbed to such an error (1994). I believed Yadin's interpretation of the human skeletal remains, despite his admission[3] that pig remains were found in locus 2001-2002, was fundamentally correct. I only retracted this idea later in 1998.

On page 299 of the monograph, Ben-Tor writes: "As noted, human remains were found in two places on Masada"; human remains were recovered from <u>three</u> or more various places atop Masada, locus 2001-2, 2005, including a cremation near the western ramp and the

[2] In the 1960s, colleagues suggested to Yadin that each and every student receiving a BA from the Hebrew University have at least one course in physical anthropology as human skeletal remains were being uncovered at an unprecedented rate following the 1967 war. Unfortunately, Yadin did not agree to this proposal, and as a result, archaeologists have failed in many instances to understand the basic and fundamental rules of burial archaeology. Even today, noted scholars have been unable to differentiate between Bedouin burials and those which are earlier and non-Bedouin. The Qumran cemetery is one glaring example. As a result, Qumran studies were on the wrong track for nearly fifty years, believing that the women and children in the Qumran cemetery were from the time of the Essenes.

[3] While physical anthropologists were aware for nearly two decades that pig bones were found in locus 2001-2, it was not until 1982 when Yadin, confronted by a journalist about the rumor, admitted to the fact (Benny Morris 1982).

bathhouse in the Northern Palace. This omission is somewhat surprising and important in the overall picture of Masada since Ben-Tor himself was physically present during the three-year span over which the excavations occurred.



Burial caves in which human skeletal remains were found. Photo: BiblePlaces.com

Yadin's attempts to understand the anthropological findings were undermined because the physical anthropologist involved in the excavation had long suffered from an unfortunate illness that led to somewhat inaccurate conclusions. For example, the age of the fetus found in locus 2001-2 was reported as being six to seven months old. However, after his accident, the remains of the fetus were discovered in the Hadassah medical school laboratory (Fig.1-2). It was clear he had misdated the fetus by two or more months.[4] Whereas this heretofore

[4] Following Professor Haas' untimely accident from which he never fully recovered, I was asked to help clear out his office in the Hadassah medical school to determine if any material found there belonged to the Israel Department of Antiquities. One item brought to my attention was the four- to five-month fetus in a box marked "Masada" that had escaped reburial in 1968.

unpublished information was not available to Ben-Tor or other scholars, it is but one of many glaring errors upon which Yadin was forced to rely.

Ben-Tor repeatedly questions Nahum Ben-Yehuda's interpretation of the Masada story; the latter based much of his argument on my initial (1994) publication, some of which I retracted in light of new evidence in 1998. He then writes that while over 900 skeletons are missing from the archaeological record and that I (Zias) believe "Josephus may have converted the few into the all," I had cited this direct quote from the writings of Shaye Cohen (1982, 404), who today ranks as one of the most searing critics of the Masada story interpreted by Yadin, *et al*. Ben-Tor then criticizes that my findings in the 1998 article were conclusions based on "photographs, largely unclear." The published article shows that two of the three photographs taken from the Hebrew University Masada archives are very clear. The third photograph, which appears in Yadin's (1966) popular book where he discusses the remains of twenty-four skeletons claimed to have been thrown into the cave, was missing from the Masada files and all attempts to obtain a copy from Yadin's publisher went unanswered. It should be evident to the reader, a fact missed for over three decades, that only a handful of crania appear in the photograph published by Yadin, that they are in disarray, and that there are clear signs of animal predation in the material both in this photo and the accompanying photos (1998). This should dispel any questions regarding the post-mortem chaos. Moreover, the black-and-white 1966 photo in question has been presented in such a way that it gives the appearance of a large number of human remains. If one views unpublished photographs in the Hebrew University archives, one can see the amount of material recovered from locus 2001 is minimal (Fig. 3). Moreover, the number of crania appearing in the photo is no more than five or six, not twenty-four and not as reported by Yadin. (Tsafrir estimated in his field notes seven crania were present). Post-mortem animal predation in the form of teeth marks on the

long bones and the fact that the hands and feet are in their correct anatomical position (Fig. 4) along with the long bones splintered for their marrow are evident in the photo. If there is any question of the validity of my interpretation for locus 2001, one has only to take a look at the remains from locus 2002, in the same cave where the base of the skull has been removed by animal predation in one cranium and the identical signs of animal predation appearing in locus 2001 are clearly evident.[5] (Fig.5)

Ben-Tor then cites Yadin's interpretation that the skeletons found in locus 2001-2 "seemed to have been thrown haphazardly into the cave, perhaps by the Roman garrison stationed at Masada after its fall." Having climbed over the southern casement wall, which is somewhat risky, I find this interpretation difficult to accept. Any wrong move leads to possible death, though the field notes of Yadin state that beneath the layer of human skeletal remains was sterile soil lying above Roman pottery and basketry (Zias 1968, 65). Would Romans have taken the risk of disposing of a handful of bodies of the 960 refugees who allegedly committed suicide in the Northern Palace (described by Josephus) on the hazardous southern slope, or would they have tossed the remains over the precipice on the northern side of the mountain?

Tsafrir noted in his Oppenheimer lecture that mats were found in locus 2001, which he believed were used to transport the bodies for burial; in fact, one fiber fragment was found attached to one of the crania. This, in my opinion, could only have occurred when the deceased was immediately buried along with the mat, something totally at variance with Jewish burial customs.

[5] Based upon the photograph, the number of remains here appears to be at least two individuals.

Ben-Tor (302) refers to the utter confusion regarding an attempt to compare the cranial characteristics between those found at Masada with others found in the region by writing that my original article (1994) was my final report; this was my first article on the human skeletal remains of five articles to date. Furthermore, comparing cranial measurements, one of the standard practices used by nearly all physical anthropologists for decades, has now been abandoned by those in the profession since it has little scientific value when used on skeletons from the recent past.

Ben-Tor then falls prey to the common belief that Roman soldiers and civilians, some of whom I believe were recovered in locus 2001-2, were cremated prior to burial; the archaeological record shows that cremation was not a hard and fast rule since most Roman soldiers were buried, uncremated, in marked cemeteries (Le Bohec 1989, 13). Moreover, the finding of swine remains along with human remains in the southern cave would in and of itself be one of the defining elements we are witnessing here: a Roman burial. According to the Roman philosopher Cicero (106-43 BC), "Only when a pig has been sacrificed was a grave legally a grave."[6] Furthermore, the Romans, like the Jews, buried the deceased outside the walls of the city. Thus, what we may be observing here is a simple burial cave for Roman soldiers and individuals somehow connected to the Roman army stationed atop Masada. One must remember that the Romans were atop Masada in one form or another from AD 6 – AD 66 and then for an additional seventy or more years[7] following the fall of Masada.

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[6] Quoted in Jocellyn, M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982) 471-81.

[7] According to Guy Stibel, via e-mail (personal communication), "Beside the theoretical possibility that Roman soldiers who assisted Herod in his fight with M. Antigonus (40-37 BC) were there, I think one may safely assume that ever since AD 6, following the annexation of Judaea to the Empire, the site was manned by a Roman contingent up to the eruption of the revolt in AD 66. Following the conquest, we do witness Roman presence at the site in Camp F2."

Furthermore, an early Christian community occupied the site from the 5th century to the time of the Moslem conquest (638). Thus, the Zealots, Essenes, and Jewish refugees from the First Revolt were atop Masada, but from AD 66 to AD 73/4. Ironically, none of the less than a dozen human remains recovered to date were ever regarded as non-Jewish.

The skeleton from Locus 2005 [8] (Fig. 6)

In his summary of the anthropological findings atop Masada, Ben-Tor, like Yadin and others, failed to bring public attention to the only undisturbed primary burial atop Masada. Locus 2005, like cave 2001-2, is on the slope of the southern cliff outside the casemate wall. It was first brought to my attention when reviewing the photographs of the site at the home of Professor Ehud Netzer, who, like Ben-Tor and many of today's prominent archaeologists, excavated Masada in the 1960s. Since the burial was never published, it does not appear in Haas' anthropological report, and the photo lacked any locus information. I believed at the time that the primary burial also came from locus 2001-2 as one additional photo of the locus showing skeletal remains, also unpublished, was published for the first time in *BAR* (Zias 1998). This burial was somewhat puzzling since it was undisturbed and the arms of the skeleton crossed the abdomen, highly unusual for Jewish burials of the period. It was not until a recent public conference that Professor Yoram Tsafrir, who excavated both loci 2001-2 and 2005, announced that this burial, partially constructed, was from locus 2005, next to a Byzantine monk's hut and not 2001-2 as I had earlier believed.[9] Furthermore, the adult was

[8] While searching for the textiles from the burial, Professor Tsafrir informed me that the locus number cited here, which is the number he presented in his Dec. 2009 lecture, is incorrect. While the correct locus number is important, it is of little consequence in terms of the argument presented here. Until the correct number is found, I shall simply refer it to as locus 2005.

[9] International Conference in honor of Aharon Oppenheimer on the occasion of his retirement. 28-29 December 2009. Tel Aviv University**.**
www1.tau.ac.il/.../**oppenheimer**%20**conference**%20--%20invitation%20with%20program.pdf –

buried in a typical linen garment and an accompanying green textile. Surrounding the head were the remains of preserved date pits, evidently placed as a burial offering—not something occurring in Jewish burials.

Determining religious affiliation is, in many instances, rather easy for physical anthropologists working in the region since the positioning of the burial along with grave goods enables one to state whether the burial is Jewish, Christian, or Moslem. All three have distinctive burial customs. Here, one sees what appears to be an adult male, lying on his back, orientated east-west with the arms lying on the lower abdomen: a typical Byzantine Christian burial found lying next to a monk's cell.[10] Jewish burial custom, however, differed in that "Jews took pains to insure that the body was interred with the limbs unbent" and that the arms were parallel to the body. Then, if the body in question were accidently uncovered, it would automatically be assumed Jewish (Safrai 1976).[11] As the Christian community inhabited the site from the second half of the 5th century to 638 when it was abandoned (Ben-Tor 2009, 255), additional Christian burials may eventually be found both within and outside the casemate walls.

The Skeletons from the Northern Palace

Ben-Tor writes in his book that of all the finds during his long and distinguished academic career the most exciting was his discovery of the three skeletons found in Herod's Northern Palace personal bathhouse (Ben-Tor 2009, 305).

[10] Thanks to the late Professor Tsafrir who over the years has provided me with information on loci 2001/2 and 2005 which appears in several articles. I am truly in debt to his assistance. He may not agree with all my conclusions; however, without his help, my research would have been found wanting. *Volume III* of the Masada series notes that the southern caves, 2001-2, 2005 and the nearby cistern will be published separately, presumably by Professor Tsafrir (Netzer 1991: 499).

[11] M. Nazir 9:3 as understood in the Talmuds, c.f. P.T. Nazir, 1X, 57d and T.B. Nazir, 65a.



Herod's northern palaces and bath house atop Masada. Photo: BiblePlaces.com

According to Ben-Tor (quoting an unpublished report), the three skeletons were those of two adults, one male aged twenty-two, one female aged eighteen along with those of a child of eleven years, all of whom had committed suicide (303). He, like Yadin, cites the well-preserved braids from the woman and the sandals recovered from the bathhouse as well as focusing attention on the hundreds of armor scales and arrowheads found in the locus appearing in the 1966 popular book. The photos of the finds from the bathhouse appearing on page 303 show three sandals. One is a child's which gives the false impression that the sandals are associated with those three individuals interred there. When I went to the storerooms of the IAA to view the sandals, the records revealed that six sandals were found in the bathhouse. However, when I attempted to pair up the sandals, it was clear that none of the six paired; thus, what was recovered from the locus were six unpaired sandals, something that was never reported, and not six from three individuals. By publishing photos of the three sandals, which Yadin did, one is left with a false impression noted in his *IEJ* report that

several *pairs* (Italics mine) of sandals were recovered (Yadin 1965, 17). No single pair was recovered.

Had Ben-Tor been aware in particular of our Near Eastern Archaeology (2006) article specifically on the archaeological/anthropological finds from the Northern Palace, it is questionable if he would have written this chapter in the style in which it appears. He also misquotes me in one statement in particular, stating that this locus was "a small burial ground from the time of the Roman occupation at Masada." Eliminating the original question mark at the end of the sentence gives the false impression that this was a statement; for me, it was in the form of a question. Secondly, had Ben-Tor given the chapter on anthropology for review to an experienced physical anthropologist several questions would have immediately been raised. For example, the determination of the sex of what they called a boy from the Northern Palace is unreliable as morphological changes used for sexing are not prominent until males reach sexual maturity. Up to that time, all sub-adult remains look female. When it appears in the November 26, 1963 unpublished report, the skeleton is correctly reported as merely a child; in the next sentence Yadin refers to the child as a boy. In the ensuing years, the child is not sexed until *Masada III* at which point Netzer again refers to the skeleton as a boy (Netzer 167). As Nahum Ben-Yehuda pointed out, Netzer is to be credited for presenting the data from the Northern Palace in a scientific way, bereft of describing the remains as those of an important commander, last warrior, or anything to do with the last of the rebels atop Masada as was done by Yadin (Ben-Yehuda 2009, 20).

Ben-Tor then criticizes the work of N. Ben-Yehuda who challenged Yadin's conclusion that "perhaps" the male skeleton from locus 8 may have been the commander of the Zealots at Masada (Ben-Tor, 306). Much of this assumption is dependent on the armor scales which were near the body. However, if one goes to the final report on the bathhouse where the

remains were recovered, one sees that scales, all of which show no signs of wear, were found scattered throughout the bath in four loci (340) 8, 9, 10 (and an additional 650 were found in locus 162). According to Guy Stibel, these scales, lacking any signs of wear or of having ever been fastened together, probably represented a collection of spare parade scales intended for later use *and were not worn by the 'commander'* (emphasis mine) as Yadin's 1966 book suggests. Stibel's conclusion (Stibel 2007, 32) that the material found in the bathhouse, which Ben-Tor cites as "the most exciting find of his long career," may simply be but a Zealot refuse dump, similar to those found in three other loci atop Masada.[12]

Ben-Tor then goes to some length over the reported number and ages of the skeletons (2009, 305) which he says "raises a number of questions." Pointing to "Yadin's report in referring to Haas, there were three skeletons: a man of about 22, a woman of about 17 and a boy of about 11." Ben-Tor then writes: "Zias says there were only two men, one of whom was about 40 and the other 22 (of which only the leg-bones remained), and the skull of a woman (Zias 1998: 44)." He then continues: "The question is whose testimony is more reliable — that of the anthropologist [Haas] who reported on the finds two weeks after they were unearthed or that of "research" [presumably mine] which Zias mentions without attribution (ibid)?" Reading this paragraph by Ben-Tor likewise raises quite a number of questions for me. First of all, I believe the opening should read that Yadin was quoting Professor Haas' report and not the other way around as reported. Second, what report was Yadin and Ben-Tor referring to? Haas' written report, later found by Alan Paris from the Israel Exploration Society, clearly states the two men were 40-35 and 20-18, not "a man of 22 and a boy of about 11" as

[12] Since the field diaries note that fecal material was present along with human skeletal remains which were poorly represented, I suggested in my 1998 (66) article that hyenas may have brought the remains into the Northern Palace bathhouse. Today, our 2007 article changes the situation somewhat, and I believe that Guy Stibel and Jodi Magness are correct: the bathhouse is but a Zealot refuse dump.

published by Yadin.[13] Third, in the opening sentence, Ben-Tor writes that there appears to be a discrepancy between the number of skeletons cited by Yadin and me; in all my writings on the remains of the Northern Palace, I note three individuals, two men and a woman. Lastly, Ben-Tor's assertion that my research on the remains found in the Northern Palace lacks any attribution is totally incorrect. The above is fully attributed in three articles (Zias 1998, 304; 1999; 2006, 45).

Ben-Tor's excitement over the remains found in the Northern Palace is certainly understandable, even after the passing of nearly five decades. Today, one only has to stand atop the upper tier to hear tour guides talk about the three individuals found in the bathhouse; it remains over time one of the more dramatic events in the Masada narrative, intended to make the adrenalin flow. The question today, however, is it true or has the excitement of the discovery clouded the facts? For example, were three individuals there or perhaps only two? Why were there six unpaired sandals (unpublished, sandals are with the IAA)? Why was one unpaired sandal found lying next to the hair of the woman; why were the remains partial and severely disturbed; and why the fecal material in the layer? The published skeletal material is likewise problematic when it comes to the number of skeletons, *e.g.,* what others refer to as a female skeleton which I discuss below. Yadin simply describes it in his earlier article as a woman's scalp and not a skeleton and notes that parts of three skeletons were found dispersed in various places (Yadin 1965, 17). However, one year later the woman's scalp now becomes "the skeleton of a young woman, with her scalp preserved intact" (Yadin 2006, 54) along with a prayer shawl (*tallith)* next to the male. Some years later when one turns to

[13] Two unpublished photos of one individual aged 16-18 years of age from the Northern Palace were later found in Tel Aviv medical school. It would appear that while there is a wide discrepancy between what Haas reported to Yadin on site (Nov. 26,1963) and what was later found written by Haas, (two males, one ca 35-40 and another 18-20 and a female of 16) was found in the loci. No mention of a 10- to 11-year-old child appears. Thanks to Alan Paris from the Israel Exploration for allowing me to view these documents which are in the archive of the IES.

Masada Volume III, edited by Ehud Netzer, the eleven-year-old boy who does not appear in the unpublished report now becomes ten, there is no mention that Zealot "commander" even appears (Netzer 167), nor does the fragment of the prayer shawl found with the male body find any mention in *Masada Volume IV*'s section on textiles (Sheffer 1994). It simply disappears. Was it ever there? I believe not.

Furthermore, Yadin, quoting Josephus, relates that the last man "with the force of his hand, ran his sword entirely through himself, and fell down dead near to his own relations." If this is the last man with his kith and kin, where is the sword? Not only is there no sword in the locus, skeletally there is little of this individual, according to the unpublished anthropological report, except his legs. Moreover, this "last and final act of defiance," dramatic as it sounds, has been shown by scholars (Cohen 1982) to be suspiciously similar to sixteen other accounts in the Roman world. In ancient times, plagiarism, particularly of "best-sellers," was the norm. Several years ago, I, along with a colleague (Azriel Gorski), requested the Forensic Department of the Israel National police headquarters to examine microscopically, the hair of the woman from the Northern Palace for hair follicles. Much to our surprise, the forensic report came back that there were no hair follicles; the hair had been sheared from the woman while she was alive, shorn in a manner consistent with the victim forcibly moving (Zias and Gorski 2006, 45). When we viewed the two photos of the hair in Yadin's popular book, which has never been updated or revised since the initial 1966 publication, the fact that the hair in the color photo, in particular the braids, had been cut is clearly evident[14]; however, the reader is left with the false impression that here lies the female skeleton as she had fallen.[15]

[14] Over the years since its initial publication in 1966, a vast number of readers, including the present author, have viewed the photo without any questioning whatsoever, despite the fact that one can clearly see that the braids have been cut. The same is true with the published photo of locus 2001/2; one can see that the human remains are in array, there are teeth marks from predators on the long bones, the hands and the feet are

While human hair appears in the archaeological record on occasion, the fact that the hair had been sheared during the time of the Zealots' capture of Masada is somewhat unique and appears to be a carrying out of the law in Deuteronomy (21:10-14), also known as the law of the captive woman. According to the law, foreign women taken captive in battle by the Israelites must shave their heads, pare their nails, change their garments, and mourn for thirty days. We find the same commandment with a slight variation in the second century BCE Essene Temple Scroll. Here it states: "You shall shave her head and pare her nails." This later change from the female carrying out the law to the effect that a male is now obligated to carry it out is regarded as a concession to male moral weakness in assuming that the soldier might be overpowered by passion and therefore have sexual relations with the non-Israelite woman taken captive during the conflict (Zias 2006, 46).

The arrows, armor scales, six unpaired sandals, animal feces, partially represented human remains of two or three individuals along with the shorn hair found in the bathhouse would seem to infer that one is simply looking at a locus wherein the refugees discarded these items upon capturing the Roman forces stationed there. The fact that the Jewish rebels did not re-inhabit Herod's Northern Palace, one of the most desirable pieces of real estate atop the mount, seems to suggest they were aware of the human remains tossed there, thus creating a cemetery within the walls of the site: something forbidden by Jewish law (Zias 2006, 47). The Northern Palace, subsequently inhabited by the Byzantines, would have halichally been forbidden to the Zealots, known for their religious fanaticism. Josephus, no great fan of the rebels, severely castigated their behavior regarding the deceased, citing the ancient law: "Let our enemies that fall in battle also be buried, nor let anyone dead lie above the ground…"

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untouched. Since this went unnoticed for over 30 odd years, I, as a physical anthropologist, find this inability of the public and colleagues to see the obvious somewhat embarrassing.

[15] Ben-Tor also misses the obvious fact with Fig. 256 (page 303). If there had been any question the hair were sheared, this photograph would remove any doubt.

(Josephus 1885, 4.202-260). The Zealots whom Josephus accuses of proceeding "without that degree of impiety, as to cast away their dead bodies without burial" (Josephus 1885, 4.202-260) apparently ignored this law atop Masada as well as other places of struggle. As we argued earlier, the biblical "captive woman" scenario appears in the light of archaeological/anthropological evidence from the bathhouse to be the most persuasive for our understanding of the Zealot's abandonment of the Northern Palace as living quarters (66-73/4 CE).

While researching the question of the human remains from Masada in 1998, I came across the official minutes of the meetings held in Jerusalem, indicating where the human skeletal remains would eventually be reinterred. Basically, there were two schools of thought: one, the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, which Yadin opposed, and the second, a site near the ramp on the western side of Masada. As to why Yadin vehemently opposed the Mount of Olives is not spelled out; however, one cannot escape the impression that Yadin was fully aware that some or many of the skeletons were not ethnically/religiously Jewish. In fact, years earlier Yadin had gone on record saying: "Only the remains from the Northern Palace were probably Jewish"[16] and "clearly connected with the tragic end of the defenders of Masada" (Yadin 1965, 16); something I have totally disagreed with (Zias 2006). Yadin thus appeared to be admitting that some of the remains found elsewhere (L. 2001-2, 2005) may be non-Jewish despite their Jewish reinternment in 1969 with full military honors. Accordingly, the dozen or so human skeletal remains were reburied on July 7, 1969 near the western ramp at Masada, as Yadin had preferred.[17][18]

[16] Aside from the (unpublished) single burial in locus 2005, I would argue that the remains from the Northern Palace bathhouse were the least of the three loci in which human remains were recovered to be ethnically Jewish. There was an additional human burial cremation (unpublished) found near the ramp.

[17] Reburying human skeletal remains discovered in surveys/excavations with full military honors was the fashion as seen by the Nahal Hever skeletons which were also reburied where they had been found on May 11,

Conclusion

"Masada shall not fall again." I, like many Israelis, made the almost obligatory secular haj to Masada (in 1966), walking the snake path in pitch black darkness to view the sunrise overlooking the Dead Sea and the mountains of Moab in the east. The "Masada shall not fall again" phrase taken from the poem "Masada" by Y. Lamdan in 1927[19] became the rallying call for the new state of Israel founded in 1948. Over the years, I remembered the phrase embedded in the mind and soul of the Jewish people until the mid-1980s at the Annual Israel Anthropological Conference held in Ein Gedi a few kilometers to the north. However, according to Josephus, the Zealots massacred 700 of their fellow Jews for not participating in the revolt, a fact rarely mentioned in the literature. One of the speakers at the conference devoted to the story of Masada was a former Israeli army general (M. Gichon) who, over the years, became a professor at Tel Aviv University. To everyone's surprise that day Gichon, admitted that the military ceremony atop Masada, in which the vow, now a metaphor for the state of Israel, that "Masada shall not fall again" had been his idea. What was more surprising

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1982. Although they were already recognized as Chalcolithic nine years earlier, they were given a state (Jewish) funeral officiated by Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren and attended by Prime Minister Menachem Begin. For the admission of error, see Nicu Haas and Hillel Natan, "Chalcolithic Burial in the Nahal Mishmar Cave," in *Excavations and Studies: Essays in Honor of Professor S. Yevin*, ed. Yohanan Aharoni (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 1973), 145–153.

[18] While visiting the HUC excavations at Tel Dan, Yadin and I had the opportunity to return to Jerusalem together. The conversation that day was rather telling. During the ride, I mentioned to Yadin that I was interested as a physical anthropologist in the human remains from Masada and was curious to know if he was aware that pig remains were found in the loci 2001/2. He replied that he was fully aware, and I quote: "I never said that the remains found there were Jewish." This was rather startling and Yadin went on to say that he was under tremendous pressure from the religious authorities, particularly the Chief Rabbi Y. Unterman to present them as the rebels from the First Revolt 66-73/4. According to Yadin, when he mentioned to the Chief Rabbi that the remains of pigs were found amongst the human remains, he was taken aback and promised to call in a few days after he had time to think the matter over. He, then, according to Yadin, called back and mentioned that "as Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto in WWII brought in swine to deal with the garbage problem, that the Jewish rebels atop Masada probably did the same." I looked at Yadin in disbelief and with a bit of surprise at his statement and mentioned that "if the Zealots had a garbage problem, the best way to deal with it was to toss it over the side and thus it would be a Roman problem." Yadin then changed the subject, and the topic was never brought up again.

[19] Lamdan, Y., *Masada: A Poem*. Tel Aviv, 1927. [Hebrew]. Thanks to Guy Stibel for bringing this to my attention.

is that Gichon had eventually realized that it was, politically and militarily speaking, an embarrassing mistake and quietly the whole performance was abandoned without any fanfare.

Like the silence over Josephus' mention that the Zealots killed 700 of their fellow Jews at Ein Gedi, the military vow taken atop Masada was but a short-lived *rite de passage*, virtually unknown until today in the public mind as well as the literature. In fact, nowhere in the many books on the site can one find mention of M. Gichon's admission that day, a few kilometers to the north, that it was his idea to have soldiers take the vow atop Masada and to quietly abandon it sometime later. Today, decades later, the vow is still part and parcel of the myth of Masada, unquestionably one of the most visited, well run, and well excavated archaeological sites in Israel.

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Figure 1-2: Cranium of an unborn child ca. 3-4 months.



Figure 3: Locus 2001. Severely disturbed remains of a minimum of 5 individuals.



Figure 4: Locus 2001. Note the feet of one individual, undisturbed in their correct anatomical positioning.



Figure 5: Locus 2002. Remains of at least two individuals. Note the cranium with the base missing, broken by animal predation to remove the brain along with teeth marks and splintering of the long bones.



Figure 6: Locus 2005 Adult male (?) lying on his back fully extended with hands across the abdomen.

Endnotes

[i] I choose to use the term anthropological in the sense that "archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing"—a New World paradigm which was long in coming to the world of biblical archaeology. Willey, Gordon, and Philip Phillips (1958) *Method and Theory in American Archeology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

[ii] Thanks to the IAA, Hebrew University Dept of Archaeology, Ehud Netzer, Yoram Tsafrir who permitted access to unpublished material cited here. Thanks to James Tabor for sharing the unpublished anthropological report in his possession.

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