

## BURIAL CAVES FROM THE INTERMEDIATE BRONZE, MIDDLE BRONZE AND IRON AGES AT NAZARETH

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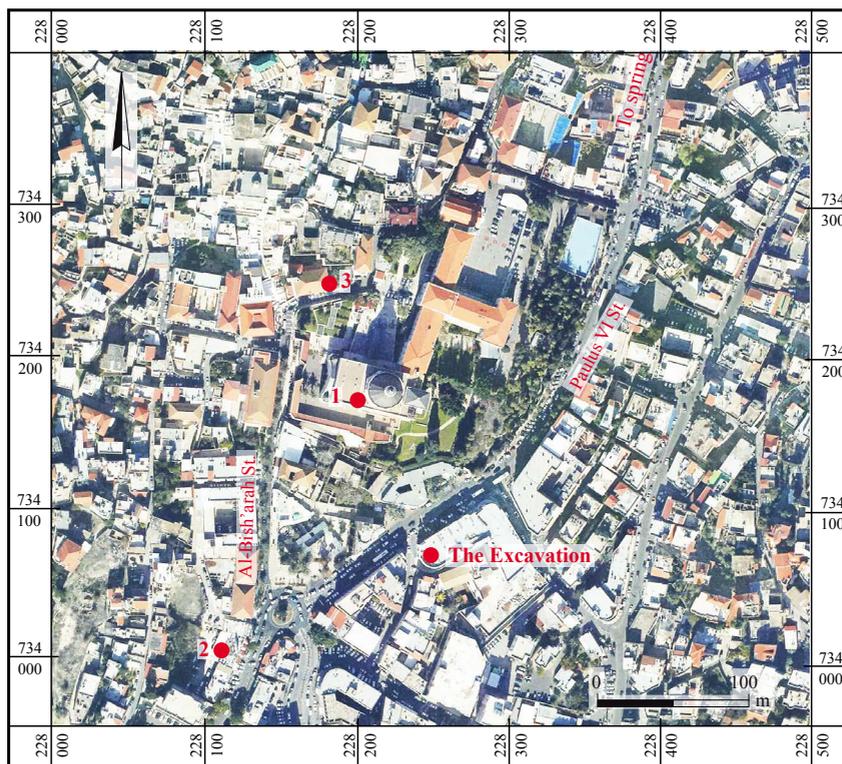
### INTRODUCTION

In April and June 2010, four burial caves (Caves A–D) were excavated within an area of about 250 sq m in a building plot adjacent to the Church of the Annunciation in the center of Nazareth (plot area c. 4 dunams; map ref. 228250/734075; Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Large-scale earthworks reached the chalky limestone bedrock at a depth of c. 8 m below the present-day ground surface, exposing and damaging the caves (Fig. 2; Plan 1).<sup>2</sup> The partially destroyed state of the caves precluded a complete description of their architectural components, but it was nonetheless observed that all the caves exhibited a basically similar architectural plan,

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<sup>1</sup> The excavation (Permit No. A-5908) was undertaken after the burial caves were damaged by large-scale earthworks carried out for the construction of a several-story underground car park beneath a large commercial center and hotel facilities. The excavation was underwritten by the Delta Epsilon Company and carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority over the course of three days in April 2010, with an additional day in June 2010 with police protection against ultra-orthodox protestors. The excavation was directed by the author, with the help of Zach Horowitz (project manager), Fadi Abu Zidan, Oren Zingboym, Rafah Abu-Raya, Butrus Hana, Abdallah Mokary, Arfan Najjar, Edna Amos Dalali and Anastasia Shapiro (area supervisors; Anastasia was also responsible for the location map and identification of materials), Yossi Yaakobi (administration), Yiftah Zehavi (security), Benny Ajami (safety), Assaf Peretz (site photography), Yossi Nagar (osteological material), Rivka Mishayev (site plans), Leea Porat (pottery restoration), Hagit Tahan-Rosen (pottery plates), Raiya Vinitzky (metallurgical laboratory), Clara Amit (finds photography), Dov Porotsky (final plans), Nimrod Getzov and Karen Covello-Paran (ceramic consultation) and Amir Golani (jewelry analysis). The author wishes to express her deep gratitude to all. This article was edited by Bronwen Manning and Ilana Peters. A permanent exhibition presenting the excavation and the finds, funded by the property owners and curated by the IAA, is being set up in the foyer of the Legacy Nazareth Hotel that was constructed above the excavation site.

<sup>2</sup> The burial caves were not discovered in the preliminary trial trenches carried out at the site prior to the earthworks, but were identified, albeit with some difficulty due to the chalky rock, during supervision of the subsequent earthworks. The original natural topography sloped down steeply into the valley, clearly separating the burial area from the settled area of the old town, as can be seen in the nineteenth-century drawings of Nazareth by David Roberts (Roberts 1855–1856). The great depth between the bedrock surface and the present-day Paulus VI road (average c. 6 m) is the result of the mid-twentieth century large-scale filling in of the wadi in order to construct the main road that traverses the town.



1. Church of the Annunciation, Bagatti (C-20/1954, C-24/1955, C-24/1960)
2. Vitto (A-398/1973)
3. Alexandre (A-5740/2009, A-6080/2011)

Fig. 1. Location map of the excavation and sites with related finds in the immediate vicinity.



Fig. 2. General view of the excavation, looking north.

comprising a vertical shaft that descended into an adjoining central burial chamber; in some caves there was an additional small side chamber. The internal chamber's rock surfaces were flaky from erosion, preventing any observations on the original quality of the stone hewing.

The extant features of the burial caves and the presence of a few, mostly fragmentary, Intermediate Bronze Age pottery sherds on the disintegrated bedrock layer inside all the burial chambers (Caves A–D), as well as some Intermediate Bronze Age sherds on the bedrock surface outside the caves, sufficed to confirm that the caves were initially hewn and served as tombs in the Intermediate Bronze Age. The *in situ* Middle Bronze Age mortuary assemblages uncovered in Caves A, B and C indicated that these three caves were reused for burial in the Middle Bronze Age, following which they were left undisturbed. The presence in Cave D of several Middle Bronze Age pottery vessels overlain by an *in situ* Iron Age funerary assemblage was evidence for a third and final burial phase in the Iron Age, after which this cave remained untouched.<sup>3</sup>

### THE BURIAL CAVES

The extant remains of the four caves are presented here (Plan 1), including a description of the intact burial layers and the fragmentary underlying remains of the earlier burial phases. The skeletal finds are treated in detail below.<sup>4</sup>

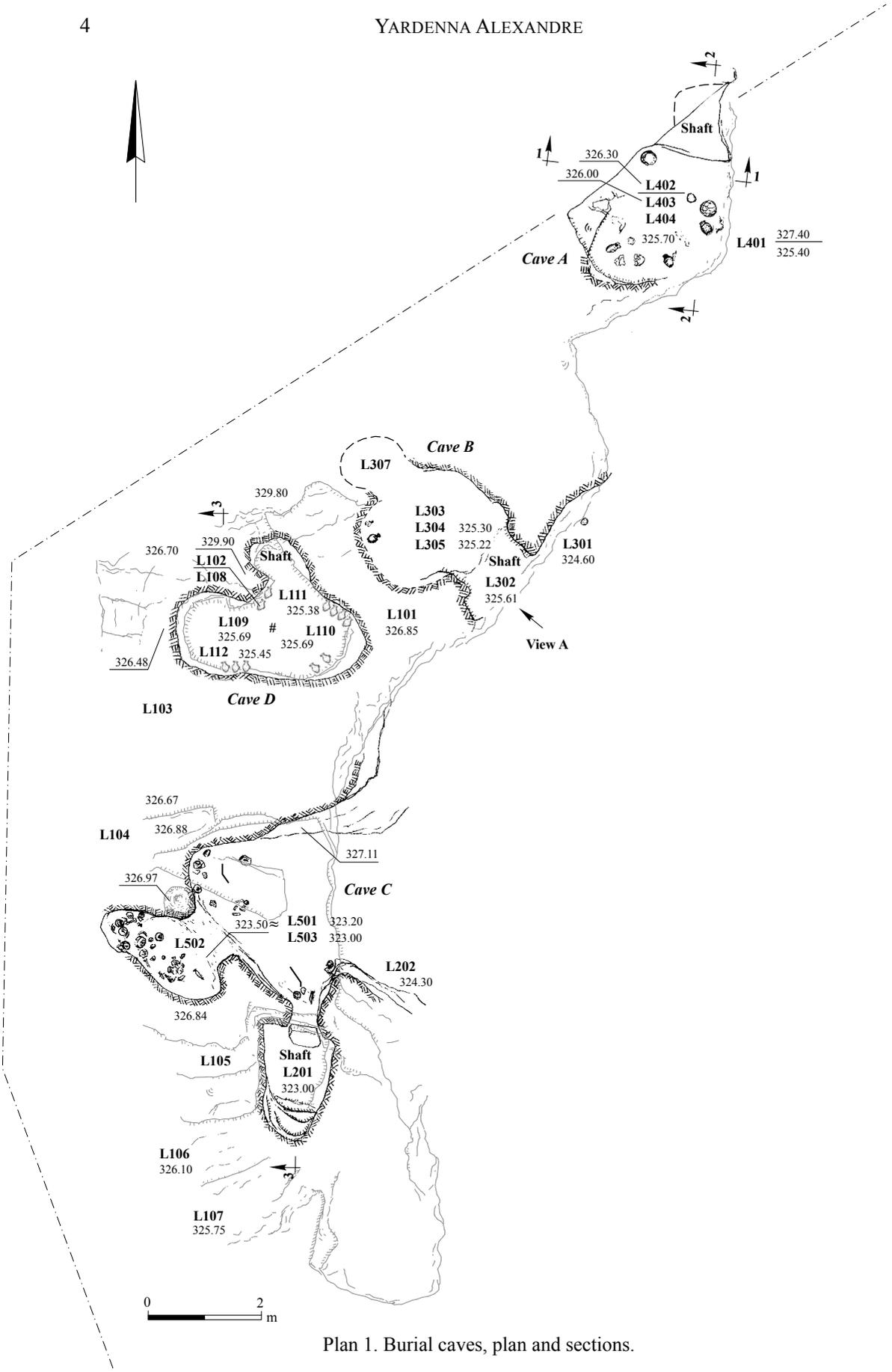
#### *Cave A*

Cave A consisted of a vertical shaft (at least 1.2 m deep) that led down into a single burial chamber (L404; c. 2.5 × 2.5 m; Plan 1; Fig. 3). The shaft was visible at the edge of the building plot, but not accessible for excavation. The eastern wall of Chamber 404 was destroyed and the extant remains of its ceiling were removed with a backhoe at the outset of the excavation. The uppermost layer in Chamber 404 was an uneven chalk layer that mostly originated from the recent earthworks (L402; 0.4–0.9 m thick). Below this debris, there was a brown soil layer (L403; c. 0.3 m thick) that incorporated a few hard, non-local limestone fieldstones lying near the cave walls. The underlying burial layer (L404; c. 0.5 m thick) consisted of two sub-layers. The upper layer (c. 0.3 m thick) contained a number of *in situ* Middle Bronze Age pottery vessels, predominantly located in the southern half of the chamber, with a small concentration of fragmentary human bones (Fig. 4). Beneath it was a chalky layer of disintegrated bedrock (also designated L404; c. 0.2 m thick) which produced fragmentary sherds of some Intermediate Bronze Age jars (not illustrated).

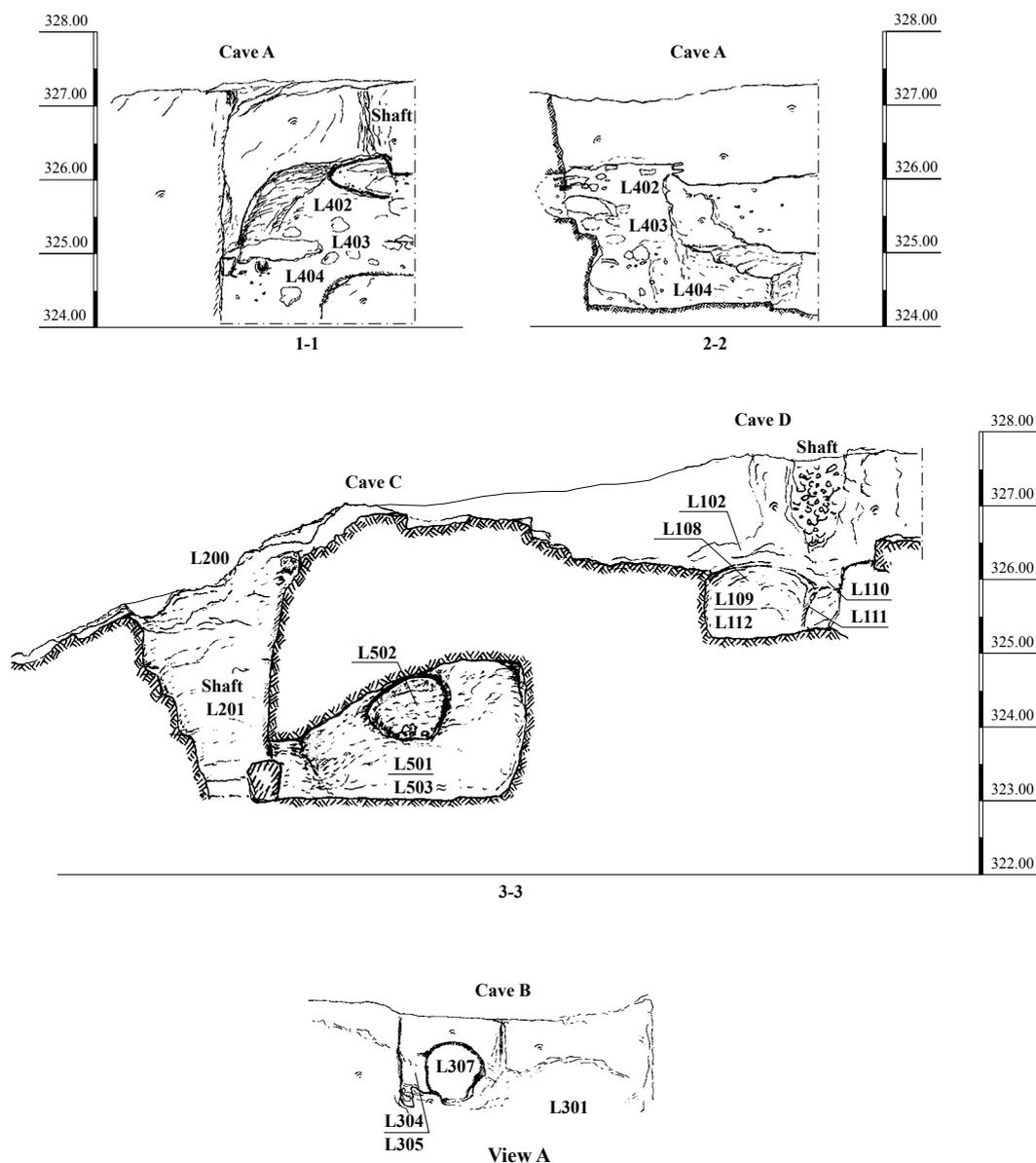
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<sup>3</sup> The following terminology is used: Intermediate Bronze Age (formerly EB/MB or MB I), Middle Bronze I (formerly MB IIA), Middle Bronze II (formerly MB IIB).

<sup>4</sup> The skeletal remains were examined and identified by Yossi Nagar of the IAA; the data in this report is based on his internal anthropological report in the IAA archives (2010, Hebrew).



Plan 1. Burial caves, plan and sections.



The Middle Bronze Age ceramic assemblage in the burial layer consisted of 20 artifacts, including 5 open bowls, a carinated bowl, a small fine bowl, 4 storage jars, 4 jugs and 3 juglets (Fig. 17:1–12). A broken, thin bronze arrowhead (Fig. 17:13) and a fragment of a small bronze pin (not illustrated) were also uncovered from this layer.

The Intermediate Bronze Age jars from the chalky bedrock were grave goods accompanying the original burial phase. It is possible that the non-local fieldstones found in the soil layer (L403) were originally brought into the cave to define partitions for the Intermediate Bronze Age burials, and were subsequently pushed aside to make space for the later Middle Bronze Age burials. Single-stone row partitions have been found in Intermediate Bronze Age burials, for example at Khirbat Naṣr ed-Din, Tiberias (Alexandre 1999:79).



Fig. 3. Cave A, Chamber 404 after excavation, looking south.



Fig. 4. Cave A, Chamber 404, looking west.

*Skeletal Remains.*— The skeletal remains found in Chamber 404 included a skull vault, teeth and postcranial fragments. The remains were scattered and the original burial positions could not be determined. The diagnostic osteological remains included four teeth and an upper limb phalanx, representing at least three individuals (Table 1).

#### *Cave B*

Cave B consisted of a roundish chamber (L304;  $2.3 \times 1.9$  m) accessed via a small circular entrance (diam. c. 0.8) from a probably rectangular-shaped—but now mostly destroyed—shaft (L302; estimated width 1.2 m; Fig. 5). In Chamber 304, an uneven chalky layer,

**Table 1. Summary of the Anthropological Data of the Skeletal Material in Caves A–D** (see n. 4)

| Burial Cave | Locus; Chamber Description | Period | MNI | Age at Death (Years)     | Gender |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------|-----|--------------------------|--------|
| A           | 404                        | MB     | 3   | <15, 25–35               |        |
| B           | 304, 305, 307              | MB     | 2   | 5–15, >16                |        |
| C           | 501/503; central chamber   | MB     | 1   | 20–30                    | M      |
|             | 502; side chamber          | MB     | 3   | 20–30, 30–40, 40–60      | M, F   |
| D           | 108, 109, 110, 111         | Iron   | 5   | 6–8, 15–20, 20–30, 30–40 |        |
|             | 112                        | MB     | 2   | 4–6, 20–25               |        |



Fig. 5. Cave B, entrance from shaft into Chamber 304, looking west.



Fig. 6. Cave B, Middle Bronze Age trefoil jug in Chamber 304, looking northwest.

consisting mainly of ceiling debris, but also containing a few sherds and some bone fragments (L303; 0.1–0.3 m thick), partially overlaid a layer of brown earth (L304; 0.3 m thick). Next to the northwestern wall of Chamber 304, an intact trefoil jug was exposed lying on the floor adjacent to some human skull fragments (Figs. 6; 18:7). A small roundish entrance (0.8 × 1.2 m) in the western wall of Chamber 304 led into an additional small chamber (L307) that could not be excavated, but was accessed under archaeological supervision during the subsequent earth removal. A storage jar with an intentionally cut-out side, containing two carinated bowls, a juglet and a few bone fragments, was exposed lying on the brown earth floor layer of Chamber 307 (Figs. 7; 18:4–6, 8).



Fig. 7. Cave B, Chamber 307, recompilation of Middle Bronze Age storage jar containing pottery vessels.

The Middle Bronze Age ceramic assemblage in Cave B comprised seven vessels consisting of three carinated bowls, two storage jars, a jug and a juglet (Fig. 18:4–8, several vessels not illustrated).

A few Intermediate Bronze Age vessels (Fig. 18:2) were uncovered together with some bone fragments in a thin layer (L305; 0.1 m thick) directly overlying the chalky bedrock in Chamber 304, as well as in Chamber 307 and on bedrock at the base of the shaft (L301, L302; Fig. 18:1, 3).

*Skeletal Remains.*— The skeletal remains in Cave B included a skull vault and postcranial fragments found scattered in Chamber 304 (L304, L305); their original burial positions could not be determined. Diagnostic osteological remains included long bone fragments from the upper (L304) and lower (L305) burial levels. The bones represent at least two individuals (Table 1). A fragment of an adult long bone was found in a storage jar in Chamber 307 (Fig. 18:6); it may have penetrated from the surrounding layers and should not be considered *in situ*.

### Cave C

Cave C was the most complete of the four burial caves uncovered, consisting of an intact vertical shaft (L201), a large central burial chamber (L501) and a small chamber leading off from it (L502; Plan 1: Section 3–3).

Shaft 201 was full of accumulated earth and some small stones, and had a rectangular shape that was slightly elliptical on its southern side (1.7–2.0 m long, 1.3–1.4 m wide, 2.6–2.8 m deep). Its walls were roughly hewn, and a couple of makeshift steps with very narrow treads were coarsely cut into its southern end (height of steps 0.3–0.4 m; tread width 0.1 m; Fig. 8). The bedrock base of the shaft led horizontally into Chamber 501 via a small low entrance mostly blocked by a large worked rectangular stone (c. 0.5 × 0.3 × 0.2 m; Fig. 9). The eastern part of the main burial Chamber 501 was destroyed by the earthworks, and the original shape of the room may have been roughly rectangular with a low ceiling (2.5–3.5 m long, 2.5–3.0 m wide, 1.4 m high; Fig. 10). The light brown earth burial layer in the central chamber (L501; 0.6–1.0 m thick) produced a small group of *in situ* Middle Bronze Age pottery vessels in the northwestern part of the chamber and a small cluster of pottery with a bronze knife and some fragmentary bones in the southern part, close to the shaft (Figs. 11; 20:1). Below L501, a thin layer of light grayish accumulation directly overlaid the chalky bedrock (L503; 0.2 m thick). It contained a Middle Bronze Age jar (Fig. 19:9) and some



Fig. 8. Cave C, Shaft 201 showing rock-cut treads, looking south.



Fig. 9. Cave C, Shaft 201 showing stone blocking entrance into Chamber 501 at base of shaft, looking north.



Fig. 10. Cave C, Chamber 501 with entrance into Chamber 502 in background, after excavation, looking west.



Fig. 11. Cave C, Chamber 501 showing lamp and bronze knife at southern end, looking southwest.

fragmentary bones, as well as some Intermediate Bronze Age sherds, including a jug (Fig. 19:1).

A raised, small, roundish entrance in the western wall of Chamber 501 (Fig. 10) led into a small roughly hewn side chamber (L502; 2.5 m long, 0.8–1.5 m wide, 0.8–1.0 m high), whose bedrock floor was 0.7 m higher and whose ceiling was slightly lower than that of the main chamber. The thin, brown soil burial layer (c. 0.2 m thick) in Chamber 502 contained several complete and intact pottery vessels, as well as a bronze axe-head, a bronze pin, and two *in situ* bronze daggers lying a few centimeters away from their stone pommelheads (Figs. 12; 13; 20:2–7).

The Middle Bronze Age ceramic assemblage from Cave C (L501, L502, L503) consisted of 25 vessels, including 2 open bowls, 5 carinated and globular bowls, a storage jar, 3 jugs, 12 juglets, a bottle and a single lamp (Fig. 19:2–18).

A few Intermediate Bronze Age potsherds (Fig. 21:1–4) were found scattered on bedrock (L106, L107) near the top entrance into Shaft 201. These sherds may have been from Intermediate Bronze Age funerary goods that were cleared out of the cave at the time of its secondary use. A couple of Middle Bronze Age cooking-pot sherds (Fig. 21:5, 6) were also found on the bedrock surface (L106) adjacent to the top entrance into Shaft 201. It is possible that the cooking pots were associated with funerary ceremonies carried out next to Cave C.

*Skeletal Remains.*— A skull vault, teeth and postcranial fragments were found scattered in Chambers 501 and 502; their original burial positions could not be determined. Diagnostic osteological remains from Chamber 501 (including L503) comprised one tooth, a few



Fig. 12. Cave C, Chamber 502 showing pottery vessels at northwest end, looking northwest.



Fig. 13. Cave C, Chamber 502 showing *in situ* bronze dagger and stone pommel, looking southwest.

vertebral fragments, and a temporal bone. Diagnostic osteological remains in Chamber 502 included four teeth, a proximal femoral head and a frontal bone. The morphology of the skull bones in both chambers was used for the estimation of sex (Bass 1987:81–82). The bones represent at least one individual in Chamber 501 and three individuals in Chamber 502 (Table 1).

#### *Cave D*

A short section of the vertical shaft that led down into the single burial chamber (L109) was visible, but not accessible for excavation. The roof of Chamber 109 had been entirely removed by the earthworks, whilst the burial layer inside the chamber remained intact. Roughly hewn Chamber 109 was of oval/kidney shape (2.4 × 2.6 m; Fig. 14). The burial



Fig. 14. Cave D, Chamber 109 showing shaft entrance in background, looking north.

layer was partially covered by an uneven chalky layer (L108; c. 0.3 m thick) that consisted of the rock ceiling collapse and earthwork debris. The burial layer was a brown soil layer (L109/110/111; c. 0.3 m thick; L109 allocated to the western part, L110 to the eastern part and L111 to the northern part, including the base of the shaft). Chamber 109 (including L108, L109/110/111) contained Iron Age material, and the brown soil burial layer featured many *in situ* broken pottery vessels concentrated predominantly near the sides of the chamber and near the base of the shaft (Figs. 15, 16). Fragmentary bones were scattered around the chamber (L108, L109/110/111 and L112), and 12 simple bronze bracelets or large rings (Fig. 25:11, 12), as well as a few fragments of plain bronze finger rings (not illustrated), were mostly found near the center of the chamber. The discovery of the bracelets in groups of two and three may be an indication that they adorned the limbs of the interred at the time of burial. Similar bronze bracelets were found on the arm and leg bones of articulated skeletons in an Iron Age burial cave at Har Yona in Upper Nazareth (Alexandre 2003:186–187, Fig. 3:1–3).

The 31 Iron Age pottery vessels from Cave D comprised 2 bowls, 1 chalice, 8 storage jars, 1 cooking jug, 3 jugs, 11 juglets and 5 lamps (Figs. 23; 24; 25:1–10). A simple bone pendant probably came from the Iron Age burial (Fig. 25:13).

Below the Iron Age burial layer and directly above the cave floor was a thin chalky layer, probably comprising disintegrated bedrock (L112; c. 0.1 m thick) with several Middle Bronze Age vessels. Other Middle Bronze Age sherds were uncovered together with Iron Age deposits (L109/110/111), indicating that the Middle Bronze Age burial deposits were not entirely pushed aside to make way for the Iron Age burials.



Fig. 15. Cave D, Chamber 109 showing Iron Age pottery (L110), looking east.



Fig. 16. Cave D, Chamber 109 showing Iron Age pottery (L111), looking north.

The Middle Bronze Age assemblage in Cave D comprised two open bowls, four carinated and globular bowls, two fine bowls, five jugs and three juglets (Fig. 22:1–9). A bronze spearhead and a toggle pin found in L112 (Fig. 22:10, 11) also came from the Middle Bronze Age burial, and it is probable that the carved ornament or bead, possibly made of

shell (Fig. 22:12), a faience bead (Fig. 22:13) and a couple of small cowrie shells (not illustrated) were also part of the Middle Bronze Age burial.

Several sherds from the Intermediate Bronze Age—cooking pots, jugs and jars—were found inside the chamber, mostly in the disintegrated bedrock layer (L112; not illustrated).

*Skeletal Remains.*— A skull vault, teeth and postcranial fragments were found scattered in Chamber 109; their original burial positions could not be determined. Diagnostic osteological remains included 17 teeth and a proximal fragment of a radius from the upper burial level and the debris above it (L108, L109/110/111), representing the Iron Age period of usage. Five teeth recovered from the lower level (L112) represent the Middle Bronze Age period. The bones represent at least five individuals from the Iron Age and two individuals from the Middle Bronze Age (Table 1).

#### *Faunal Remains from the Caves*<sup>5</sup>

A few animal bones retrieved with the human skeletal material in the caves were preliminarily identified as cattle and caprids. Their presence in the caves was probably as mortuary offerings accompanying the Middle Bronze Age burials.

## THE FINDS

The burial caves contained large quantities of pottery, some metal artifacts and a few other small finds. The Intermediate Bronze, Middle Bronze and Iron Age finds are presented in Figs. 17–25 by cave and then, according to period.<sup>6</sup> The pottery is discussed below according to period, then typologically, including references to contemporary sites. A presentation of the metal and other small artifacts follows. Whilst the findspots in the caves of several pottery vessels are marked on the plans, the exigencies of the excavation precluded the recording of the location of each specific vessel.

### **Intermediate Bronze Age**

The Intermediate Bronze Age finds consisted of several worn pottery sherds and a few partial vessels. No metal or other artifacts could be securely attributed to the Intermediate Bronze Age burials. The absence of such finds is probably due to the cleaning out of the caves prior to their reuse in the Middle Bronze Age. It is possible, but by no means certain, that the fragmentary thin leaf-shaped arrowhead found in Cave A (Fig. 17:13) originated in the Intermediate Bronze Age burial rather than in the Middle Bronze Age burial.

<sup>5</sup> The faunal remains were not fully processed, but are stored with the pottery in the IAA storerooms.

<sup>6</sup> Only about one-third of the complete and almost complete Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery vessels were drawn due to budget restrictions.

*Pottery* (Figs. 18:1–3; 19:1; 21:1–4)

The worn sherds of the Intermediate Bronze Age pottery vessels were found on the bedrock floor layers of all the caves (Caves A–D), and a few additional sherds were retrieved from the natural bedrock surface adjacent to the entrance shaft into Cave C. The sherds are the fragmentary remains of the earliest mortuary assemblages in the caves, indicating that the caves were first hewn and used for burial in the Intermediate Bronze Age. The diagnostic pottery (21 sherds) included a bowl, a teapot, and several jars and jugs. The forms align with the Intermediate Bronze Age pottery repertoires from tombs in the Jezreel Valley lying southwest of Nazareth, for example at Megiddo (Guy 1938) and at Ha-Zore‘a (Meyerhof 1989), as well as from a domestic site, ‘Ein el-Ḥilu, in present-day Migdal Ha-‘Emeq (Covello-Paran 2009).

*Open Spouted Bowl* (Fig. 21:1).— This type of open spout is found attached to the rim of deep bowls. Bowls with the same spout found in domestic contexts include deep bowls with a flattened rim, a flat base, and often, painted decoration. Comparable bowls have been found at ‘Ein el-Ḥilu (Covello-Paran 2009: Fig. 8:7, 8).

*Teapot Spout* (Fig. 18:1).— The spout of a teapot was found; however, the teapot subtype to which it was attached was not determined. Numerous variants of teapots and teapot-amphoriskoi were found in Intermediate Bronze Age cemeteries at Ha-Zore‘a (Meyerhof 1989: Pl. 3:57:1, 7, 16, 21, 24) and Megiddo (Guy 1938: Pls. 21:14–16; 22:24; 31:2, 3).

*Storage Jars* (Fig. 21:2, 3).— The storage jars represent two different variants of the Intermediate Bronze Age storage jar. One (Fig. 21:2) has an upright neck and an everted rim; the other (Fig. 21:3) has a short flaring neck and a tapered rim. Similar jars are known from domestic and mortuary contexts and have either folded-envelope ledge handles similar to those illustrated in Figs. 18:3 and 21:4 or flattened strap handles. Similar storage jars were found at Ha-Zore‘a (Meyerhof 1989: Pls. 10:3:33, 50; 11:3:51, 58) and Megiddo (Guy 1938: Pls. 12:6; 20:30; 21:20, 21).

*Jugs* (Fig. 18:2; 19:1).— The wide-necked jugs have a slightly flaring neck, a flat strap handle extending from the rim to the widest part of the globular body, and probably a flat base (not preserved). There is no surface treatment on the jugs. These jugs were commonly placed as burial offerings in Intermediate Bronze Age tombs. Numerous jugs of this type have been found in the Intermediate Bronze Age tombs at Ha-Zore‘a (Meyerhof 1989: Pl. 9:3:2, 49, 76, 79 and other examples cited therein).

*Ledge Handles* (Figs. 18:3; 21:4). — The two illustrated ledge handles are from closed vessels, probably storage jars. They are both of the folded-envelope ledge type, have three flaps, and are commonly found on storage jars from the tombs at Ha-Zore‘a (Meyerhof 1989: Pl. 10:3:8, 33) and Megiddo (Guy 1938: Pls. 7:2, 3, 13; 20:30; 22:20, 22).

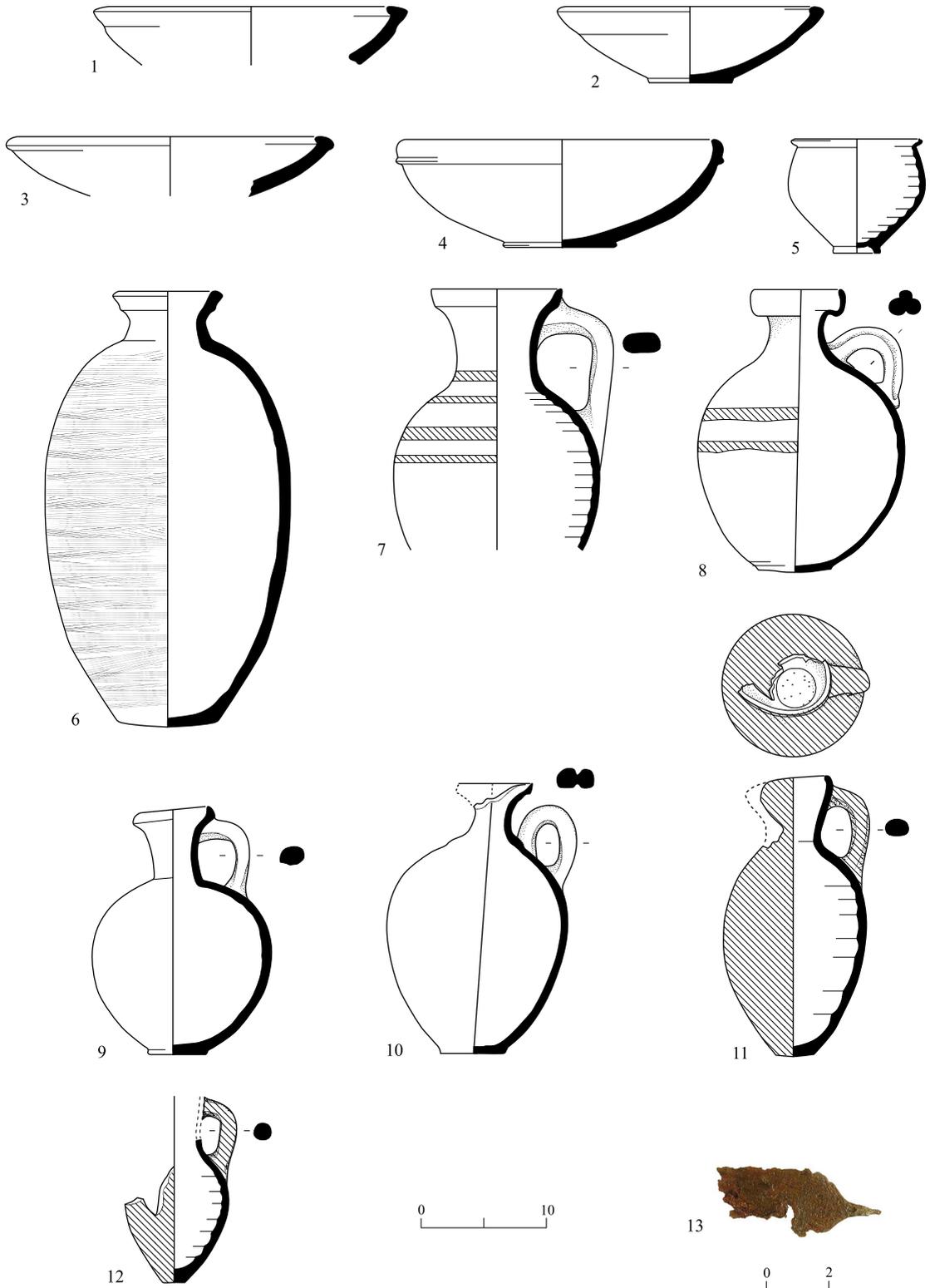


Fig. 17. Cave A, Middle Bronze Age pottery (1-12) and metal arrowhead (13).

◀ Fig. 17

| No. | Vessel    | Locus | Basket | Description                       |
|-----|-----------|-------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 1   | Bowl      | 402   | 4002   | Light brown, grits, gray core     |
| 2   | Bowl      | 404   | 4018/2 | Light brown, gray core            |
| 3   | Bowl      | 404   | 4013   | Light brown, gray core            |
| 4   | Bowl      | 404   | 4012   | Orangish brown, gray grits        |
| 5   | Fine bowl | 403   | 4005   | White fine ware, smoothed surface |
| 6   | Jar       | 404   | 4011   | Light brown, combed surface       |
| 7   | Jug       | 403   | 4004   | Orangish brown, red bands         |
| 8   | Jug       | 404   | 4010   | Cream ware, red bands             |
| 9   | Jug       | 404   | 4015   | Orange                            |
| 10  | Jug       | 404   | 4006   | Light brown                       |
| 11  | Juglet    | 404   | 4008   | Light brown, red slip             |
| 12  | Juglet    | 404   | 4018/1 | Orangish brown, red slip          |
| 13  | Arrowhead | 404   | 4017   | Bronze; no section as too thin    |

## Middle Bronze Age

The Middle Bronze Age finds consist of many complete pottery vessels, several bronze weapons, a toggle pin, stone pommels and a few beads.

*Pottery* (Figs. 17:1–12; 18:4–8; 19:2–18; 21:5, 6; 22:1–9)

Large numbers of intact complete and almost complete Middle Bronze Age pottery vessels were found in Caves A–D (c. 68 vessels). There is a high degree of similarity between the four assemblages. Each consists predominantly of various bowls, storage jars, jugs and juglets, and is supplemented by a few fine imported vessels and a single lamp. No cooking vessels were found in the caves, though two cooking pots were found on the bedrock surface outside Cave C. The morphological similarity of the specific forms within the four assemblages led to the understanding that they present a chronologically homogeneous vessel group, reflecting the use of the tombs over a limited timespan within the Middle Bronze Age.

Similar ceramic assemblages have been exposed in tombs attributed to the Middle Bronze Age in northern Israel, reflecting the distribution of this material culture throughout the region. The published tomb repertoires (in order of publication year) include tombs from Megiddo (Guy 1938; Loud 1948), Ginosar and Kefar Szold (Epstein 1974), Tel ‘Amr (Druks 1982), Gesher (Garfinkel and Bonfil 1990), Dan (Ilan 1996b), Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996), Hazor (Maeir 1997), Kabri (Kempinski, Gershuny and Scheftelowitz 2002), Kefar Veradim, Kafr Jatt and Nahal Yehi‘am (Getzov and Nagar 2002), Sasa (Ben-Arieh 2004), Tur‘an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005), Yoqne‘am (Livneh 2005) and Fassuṭa (Gershuny and Aviam 2010). In Nazareth itself, some similar Middle Bronze Age pottery vessels were uncovered in tombs excavated in the precinct of the Church of the Annunciation (Fig. 1:1),

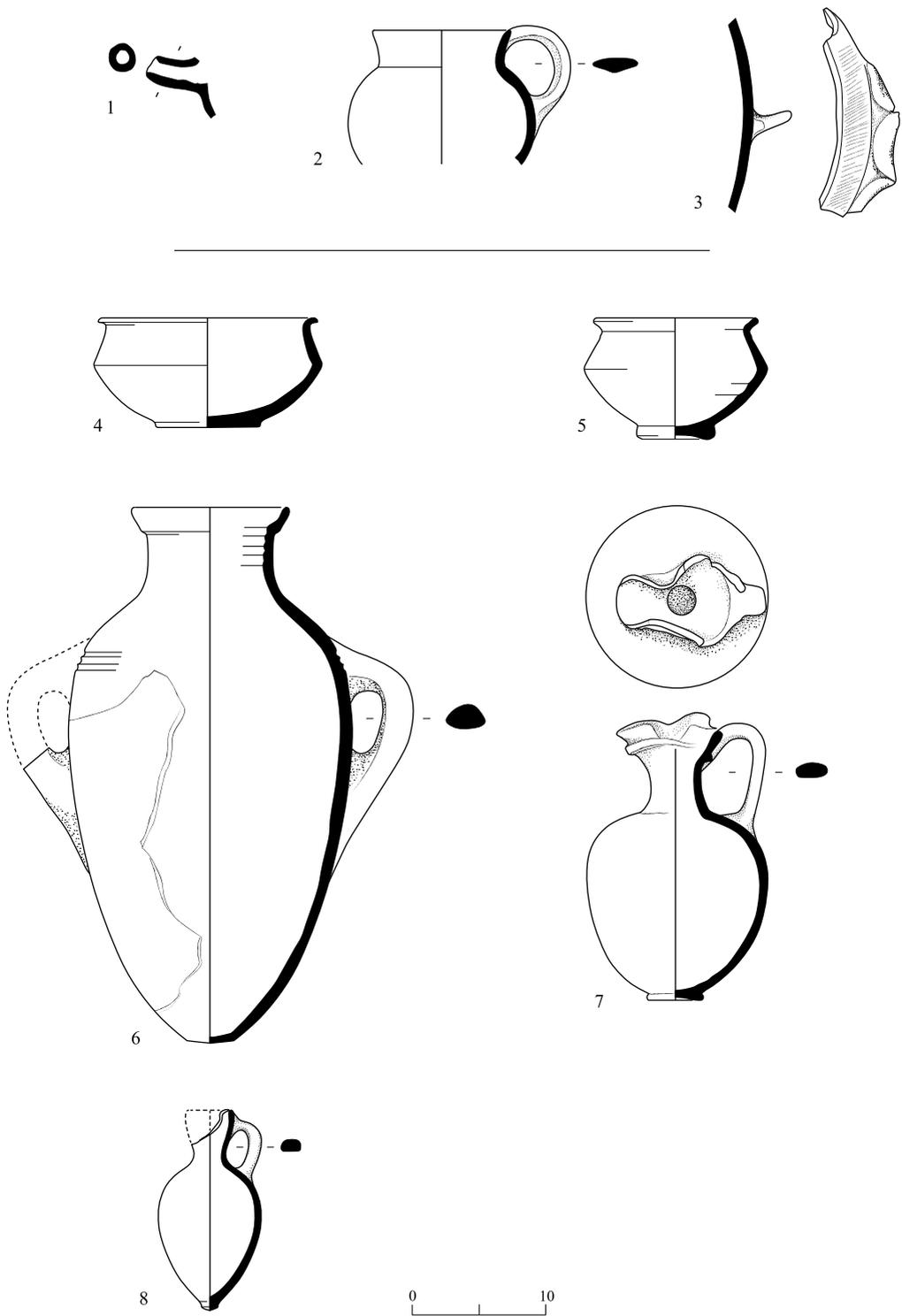


Fig. 18. Cave B, Intermediate Bronze Age (1–3) and Middle Bronze Age (4–8) pottery.

◀ Fig. 18

| No. | Vessel         | Locus | Basket | Description                        |
|-----|----------------|-------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 1   | Teapot spout   | 301   | 3014/1 | Cream, black grits                 |
| 2   | Jug            | 305   | 3011/1 | Light orangish brown               |
| 3   | Ledge handle   | 301   | 3014   | Cream, black grits, combed surface |
| 4   | Carinated bowl | 307   | 3017/2 | Orange, gray grits                 |
| 5   | Carinated bowl | 307   | 3017/1 | Cream                              |
| 6   | Storage jar    | 307   | 3015/3 | Orangish brown                     |
| 7   | Jug            | 304   | 3008   | Light orange                       |
| 8   | Juglet         | 307   | 3015/1 | Buff                               |

about 80 m northwest of the present excavation (Bagatti 1969:32–37, 245–268; Tombs 1, 7, 8, 80; Plate XI showing specific location of tombs).

The ceramic repertoires from the aforementioned tombs have been dated by many parallels and correlations with stratified sites, predominantly of the transitional MB I–II period. A few of these tombs also exhibited pottery forms that reflect a more extended period of use into MB II. The similarity between the finds presented here and the other burial repertoires permits dating the Nazareth burials to the same transitional MB I–II period.

The discussion of the Middle Bronze Age pottery below uses Ḥazor Tomb 1181 as a primary reference (Maier 1997), as almost all the Nazareth vessels have parallels in this rich contemporary assemblage (130 vessels). Maier's publication (1997) is an in-depth analysis that cites a comprehensive range of parallels. The more recent pottery repertoires from contemporary Upper Galilee and Jordan Valley tombs for the most part conform to the Ḥazor Tomb 1181 pottery repertoire and analysis. The similarity of the Nazareth pottery forms to the Upper Galilee tomb repertoires reflects the presence of a shared facet of Upper Galilean and Jordan Valley material culture in the Lower Galilee. Additional parallels cited here are from Middle Bronze Age tombs previously excavated in Nazareth (Bagatti 1969), and from a pottery assemblage (44 vessels) uncovered in a tomb excavated at Tur'an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005), located c. 10 km northeast of Nazareth, in order to emphasize the presence of a similar material culture within the Lower Galilee—an area that is not as well-represented as the Upper Galilee and the northern valleys during this period. Specific parallels to the other sites are mentioned as deemed relevant.

*Platter Bowls* (Figs. 17:1–4; 19:2, 3; 22:1, 2).— The open bowls have flat disc bases, or in one case, a slightly concave base (Fig. 22:1), and fairly thick, gently curving walls. The bowls were not burnished and most were not slipped. They exhibit slight rim variations, including simple rims (Figs. 19:2; 22:1), slightly inverted rims (Fig. 17:1–3) and folded-over rims (Figs. 17:4; 19:3; 22:2). Similar bowls were found in Middle Bronze Age tombs, including at Nazareth (Bagatti 1969: Fig. 210:27–30, 32), Tur'an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005:2, Fig. 3:1, 2) and Ḥazor Tomb 1181, where it was noted that this bowl type appears throughout MB I–II (Maier 1997:299).

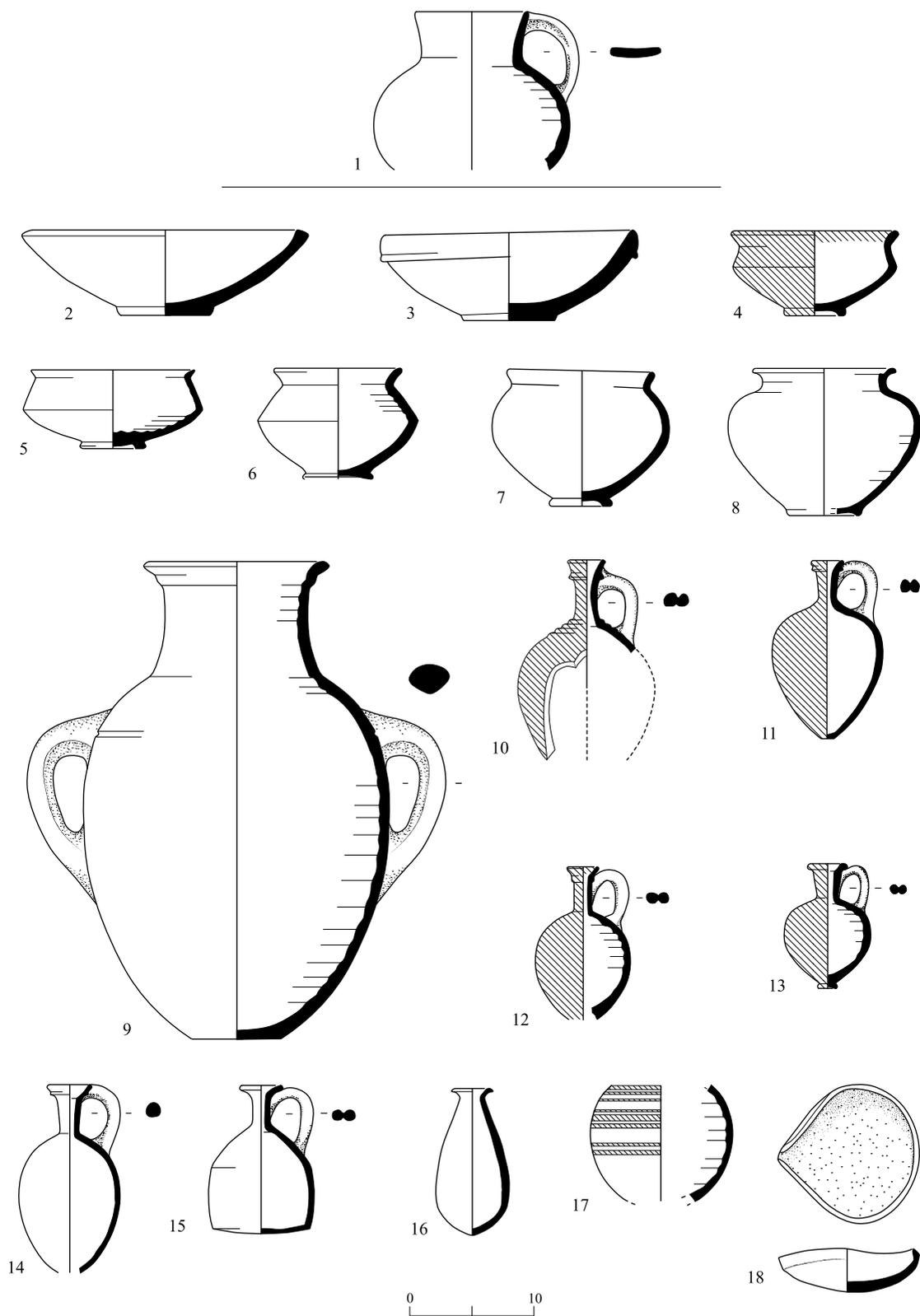


Fig. 19. Cave C, Intermediate Bronze Age (1) and Middle Bronze Age (2–18) pottery.

◀ Fig. 19

| No. | Vessel         | Locus | Basket | Description                                  |
|-----|----------------|-------|--------|--|
| 1   | Jug            | 503   | 5039   | Light orangish brown                         |
| 2   | Bowl           | 502   | 5022   | Light brown, possible red slip               |
| 3   | Bowl           | 502   | 5027   | Light brown                                  |
| 4   | Carinated bowl | 502   | 5015   | Light brown, white grits, red burnished slip |
| 5   | Carinated bowl | 501   | 5010   | Cream, smoothed ext.                         |
| 6   | Carinated bowl | 502   | 5020   | Light brown                                  |
| 7   | Globular bowl  | 501   | 5012   | Light brown, possible red slip               |
| 8   | Globular bowl  | 503   | 5014   | Light brown                                  |
| 9   | Jar            | 502   | 5023   | Orangish brown, gray grits                   |
| 10  | Juglet         | 502   | 5036   | Orangish red, red slip                       |
| 11  | Juglet         | 501   | 5011   | Light brown, worn dark red burnished slip    |
| 12  | Juglet         | 502   | 5031   | Light brown, red burnished slip              |
| 13  | Juglet         | 502   | 5030   | Cream, worn brown, burnished slip            |
| 14  | Juglet         | 502   | 5035   | Brown fine ware, smoothed surface            |
| 15  | Juglet         | 501   | 5012   | Light brown, possible red slip               |
| 16  | Bottle         | 502   | 5016   | Creamish buff                                |
| 17  | Jug            | 501   | 5010   | Cream fine ware, brown lines and band        |
| 18  | Lamp           | 501   | 5013   | Light brown                                  |

Fig. 20 ▶

| No. | Artifact | Locus | Basket | Description    |
|-----|----------|-------|--------|----------------|
| 1   | Knife    | 501   | 5004   | Bronze         |
| 2   | Axe      | 502   | 5026   | Bronze         |
| 3   | Dagger   | 502   | 5025   | Bronze         |
| 4   | Dagger   | 502   | 5024   | Bronze         |
| 5   | Pin      | 502   | 5007   | Bronze         |
| 6   | Pommel   | 502   | 5018   | Hard limestone |
| 7   | Pommel   | 502   | 5017   | Hard limestone |

*Carinated Bowls* (Figs. 18:4, 5; 19:4–6).— The small carinated bowls have a disc or very low flat ring base, an angular mid-bowl carination and a short, everted rim. Some are red-slipped and burnished, whilst others are plain. Similar carinated bowls are found in Nazareth (Bagatti 1969: Fig. 210:16), Tur'an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: Fig. 3:3, 4) and in Hazor Tomb 1181, where these bowls are far fewer than the globular or more rounded carinated bowls (Maier 1997: Fig. IV.2:7, 8).

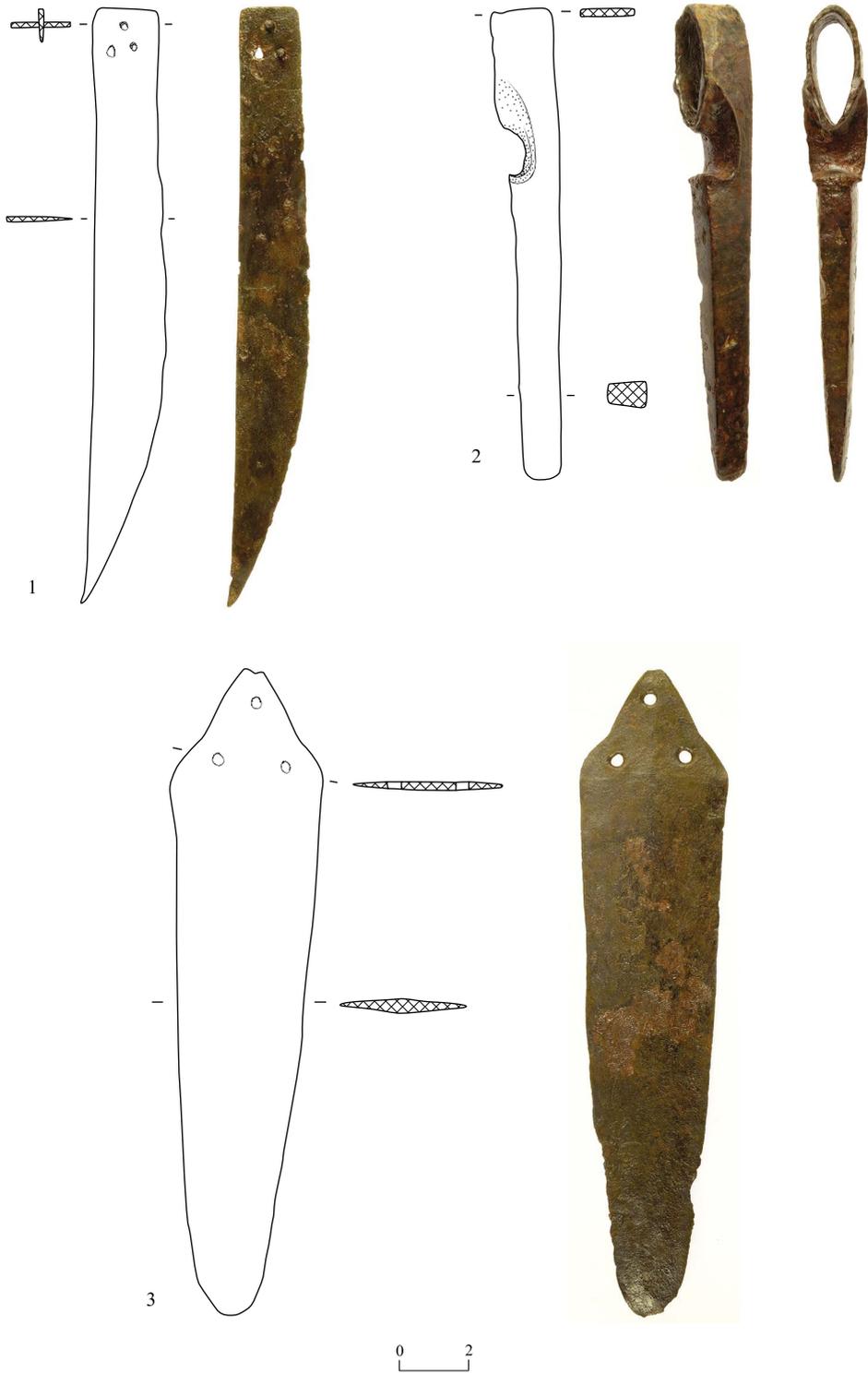
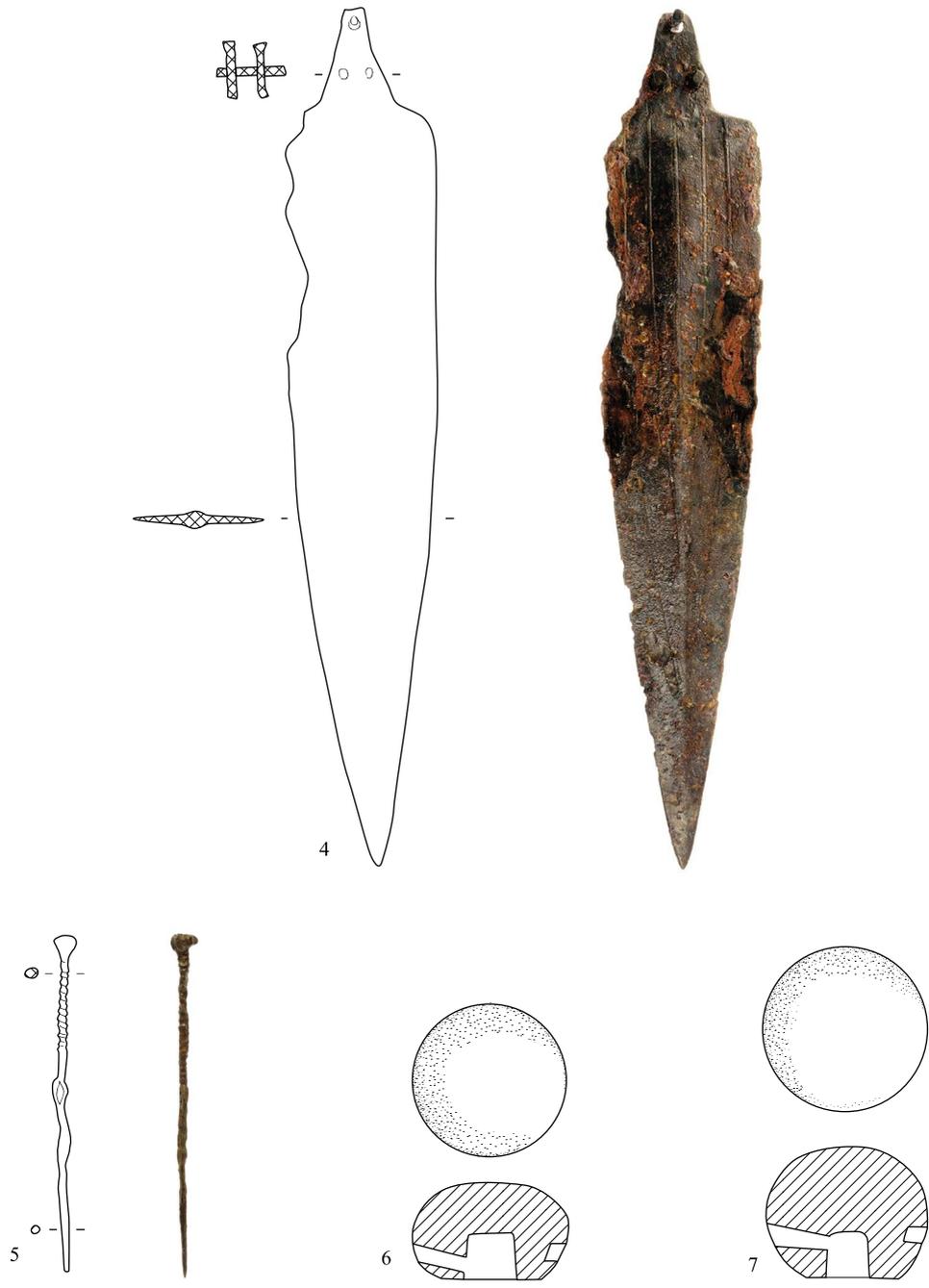


Fig. 20. Cave C, Middle Bronze Age metal (1-5) and stone (6, 7) artifacts.



0 2  
Fig. 20. (cont.)

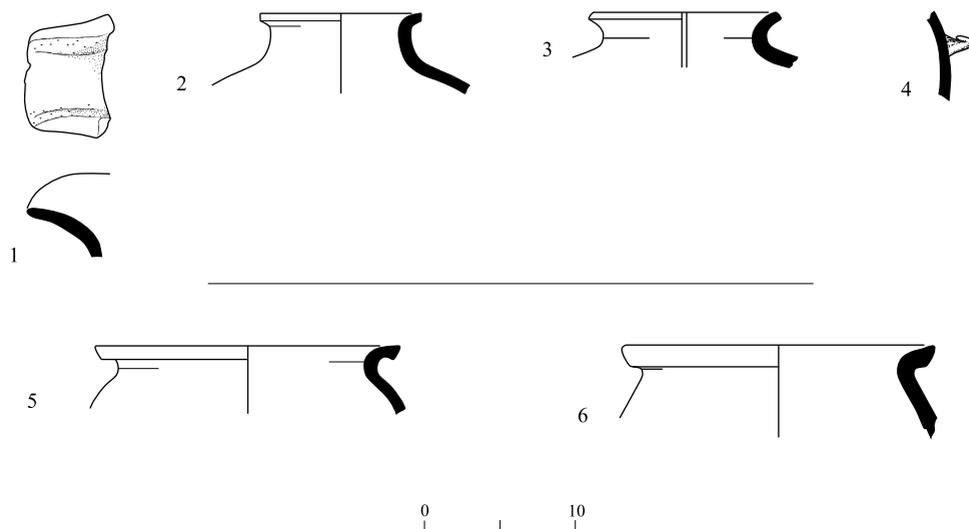


Fig. 21. Outside Cave C, Intermediate Bronze Age (1–4) and Middle Bronze Age (5, 6) pottery.

| No. | Vessel       | Locus | Basket | Description                             |
|-----|--------------|-------|--------|---|
| 1   | Bowl spout   | 107   | 1008/2 | Cream, black grits                      |
| 2   | Storage jar  | 106   | 1007/9 | Cream, black grits                      |
| 3   | Storage jar  | 107   | 1008/3 | Cream, black grits                      |
| 4   | Ledge handle | 106   | 1028/7 | Cream, black grits                      |
| 5   | Cooking pot  | 106   | 1028/6 | Orangish brown, white grits, black core |
| 6   | Cooking pot  | 106   | 1028/4 | Orangish brown, white grits, black core |

Fig. 22 ▶

| No. | Vessel        | Locus | Basket | Description                          |
|-----|---------------|-------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 1   | Bowl          | 112   | 1061   | Orangish brown, gray core            |
| 2   | Bowl          | 112   | 1068   | Orangish brown, gray core            |
| 3   | Globular bowl | 110   | 1032/1 | Orangish brown                       |
| 4   | Globular bowl | 112   | 1061/2 | Orangish brown                       |
| 5   | Bowl          | 112   | 1061   | White fine ware, reddish brown lines |
| 6   | Bowl          | 112   | 1058   | Buff fine ware                       |
| 7   | Jug           | 112   | 1058/2 | Light brown, red bands               |
| 8   | Large juglet  | 111   | 1070   | Buff, red slip                       |
| 9   | Juglet        | 110   | 1032/2 | Orangish brown                       |
| 10  | Spearhead     | 112   | 1068   | Bronze                               |
| 11  | Pin           | 112   | 1067   | Bronze                               |
| 12  | Bead          | 109   | 1053   | Shell                                |
| 13  | Bead          | 112   | 1062   | Faience                              |

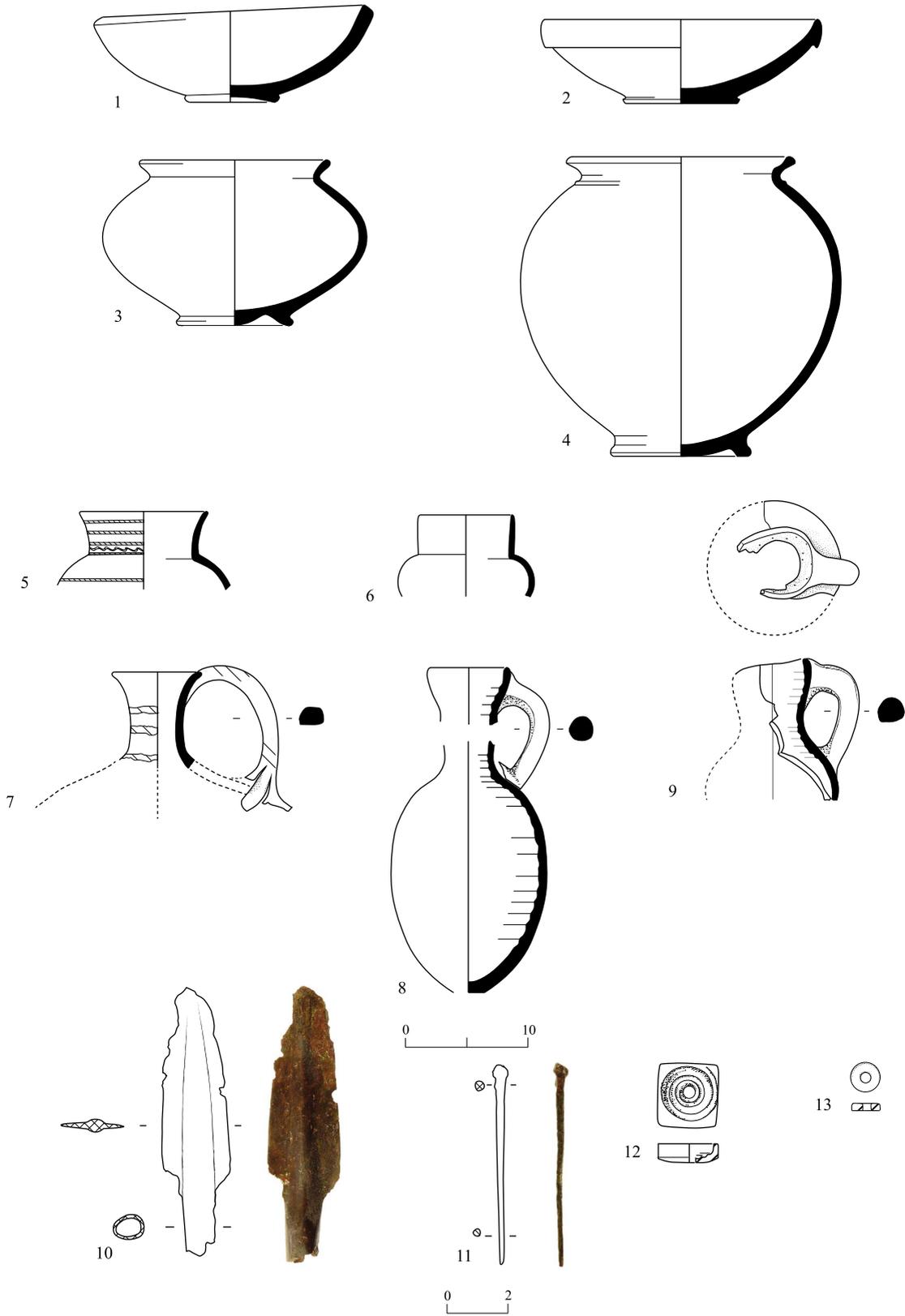


Fig. 22. Cave D, Middle Bronze Age pottery (1-9), metal artifacts (10, 11) and beads (12, 13).

*Globular Bowls* (Figs. 19:7, 8; 22:3, 4).— The plain globular bowls uncovered here are of various sizes, all of them larger than the carinated bowls. They have a low ring base, a rounded body and usually a short, everted rim. One bowl has a higher straight neck and an everted rim forming an inner gutter (Fig. 19:8). These rounded bowls are common in MB I and II repertoires, and similar bowls are found in Tur'an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: Fig. 3:5, 6) and Hazor Tomb 1181, where it was noted that the rounded bowls with a higher straight neck and a flat everted rim are diagnostic of the transitional MB I–II period and have parallels from Lebanon (Maeir 1997:299 and n. 24).

*Fine Rounded Bowl* (Figs. 17:5).— This small, somewhat deep, thin-walled bowl has a raised ring base, a gently rounded carinated profile and an everted rim. It was made of fine whitish gray clay with a smooth outer surface and no evidence of a painted decoration. This was not a local bowl; it was probably an imported vessel, but no clear parallels have been found.

*Monochrome Painted Cream Ware Bowls and Juglet* (MPCW; Figs. 19:17; 22:5, 6).— A high-necked globular bowl (Fig. 22:5) and a globular juglet or small jug (Fig. 19:17), both wheel-made of very well-levigated, whitish to cream-colored clay and decorated with reddish brown horizontal lines and bands, are identified by their ware and decoration as Monochrome Painted Cream Ware. An additional similar fine high-necked bowl with a more buff-colored finish and no painted decoration may also belong to MPCW (Fig. 22:6). Fine MPCW juglets are found at Hazor Tomb 1181 (Maeir 1997: Fig. IV.5:12–14). A wide variety of MPCW vessels found in Stratum XI at Dan are attributed to a limited temporal range from the end of MB I to mid-MB II (Ilan 1996a:162–165).

*Cooking Pots* (Fig. 21:5, 6).— The sherds found on the bedrock outside the shaft entrance into Cave C belong to wheel-made, globular cooking pots—a type that appears and becomes dominant in MB II (Amiran 1969:102, Pl. 30). It seems that cooking pots are not found in Middle Bronze Age mortuary assemblages in cave burials, for example, they are not part of the burial repertoires at Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996), or at Kefar Szold and Ginosar (Epstein 1974). The cooking pots may have been used in food preparation for grave-side funerary ceremonies.

*Storage Jars* (Figs. 17:6; 18:6; 19:9).— A total of seven storage jars were uncovered in the tombs; only three are illustrated. They have thick-walled, ovoid bodies, flattened bases and large, heavy, mid-body loop handles. The necks are medium to high and the rims are outflaring. The storage jar from Cave C has a relatively short body compared to its high neck and outflaring rim (Fig. 19:9). One storage jar from Cave A was handleless and had combed lines covering the entire surface of the jar (Fig. 17:6). A similar jar with combed lines on the shoulder and handles came from Tomb 1, Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Fig. 6:1). A storage jar from Cave B had an intentionally cut-out side and served as a receptacle for

several smaller vessels (Fig. 18:6). Similar jars—often with the necks removed—have been found in Middle Bronze Age settlements, e.g., in ‘Afula (Suknik 1948: Pl. XIV:15) and Tel Dan, where they were used for child burials (Ilan 1996b: Fig. 4.90:1).

*Jugs* (Figs. 17:7–10; 18:7; 22:7).— The jugs exhibit a variety of body forms, necks, rims and handles. Three globular jugs have fairly narrow necks with either everted or gutter-shaped rims, single- or triple-strand handles, and can be plain or decorated with red bands (Fig. 17:7–9). Similar globular jugs were found at Tur‘an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: Fig. 7:3) and Ḥazor Tomb 1181 (Maeir 1997: Fig. IV.7). One jug has an ovoid body with a flat base, a narrow neck, an everted rim probably with a gutter, and a double-stranded handle on the shoulder (Fig. 17:10). It seems that jug handles were attached entirely to the shoulder only where the rim finish impeded their more practical location from the rim or neck to shoulder. Ovoid jugs with various features are found in Ḥazor Tomb 1181 (Maeir 1997: Fig. IV.8:3), Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Fig. 15:5–7) and Fassuṭa (Gershuny and Aviam 2010: Fig. 12:3).

A piriform jug from Cave B has a carefully molded trefoil rim and a handle from rim to shoulder (Fig. 18:7). A similar trefoil rim is found on a red-burnished piriform-shaped jug from Tur‘an, where the appearance of this form is dated toward the end of MB I (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: Fig. 7:1).

*Cypriot Jug* (Fig. 22:7).— The handle, neck and everted rim of a handmade jug, decorated with dark reddish brown bands, was identified as an imported Cypriot White Painted III–IV Pendant Line Style Jug. Jugs of this type were found in tombs attributed to late MB I or transitional MB I–II, for example in Tomb 4 at Ginosar, whose parallels were noted from Sidon and Ugarit (Epstein 1974:23, Fig. 15:9), at Jatt (Getzov and Nagar 2002: Fig. 4:4) and at Tel Shimron in the Jezreel Valley (Covello-Paran, forthcoming). Gerstenblith dated the first appearance of the imported Cypriot jugs in Israel to the end of MB I (Gerstenblith 1983:70–72).

*Juglets* (Figs. 17:11, 12; 18:8; 19:10–15; 22:8, 9)

The 20 juglets are classified into dipper juglets and smaller piriform and cylindrical container juglets.

*Dipper Juglets* (Figs. 17:11, 12; 22:8, 9).— These are fairly large juglets with an oval-shaped body, a pinched lip and a small flattened base; some vessels are plain, whilst others are slipped and burnished. Similar examples come from Ḥazor Tomb 1181 (Maeir 1997: Fig. IV.6) and Tur‘an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: Fig. 8:3–7). Dipper juglets are considered standard components of both MB I and MB II burials and consequently, cannot serve as chronological indicators.

*Piriform Juglets* (Figs. 18:8; 19:10–14).— Piriform juglets appeared in all the caves, and predominated in the assemblage from Cave C. These juglets have a small flat or button base, a tall narrow neck, an everted or stepped rim with or without a gutter, and a handle, often double-stranded, from rim to shoulder. Several juglets are red-slipped and vertically burnished; the slip may have worn off additional juglets. Like the dipper juglets, these piriform juglets are also ubiquitous in MB I–II tombs. Many of these juglets exhibited some variety in finish, and parallels were found in H̄azor Tomb 1181 (Maeir 1997:301, Fig. IV.5:1–11) and Tur'an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: Fig. 9). At Ginosar, the appearance of the red-burnished piriform juglets with a button base, an everted stepped or candlestick rim and a double or triple-stranded handle was dated to the transitional MB I–II and is considered to be the characteristic form of MB II (Epstein 1974: Fig. 8:9–14); however, this form has since been found at Dan in earlier MB I contexts (Ilan 1991).

*Cylindrical Juglet* (Fig. 19:15).— A single plain cylindrical juglet with a slightly convex base was uncovered in the Nazareth burial caves. Similar cylindrical juglets were found in Tomb 2/3 at Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Figs. 9:1–7; 13:14) and in Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996: Fig. 9:7–10), but they were not found in H̄azor Tomb 1181. The cylindrical juglets are rare in the transitional MB I–II period and are more characteristic of MB II (Epstein 1974:21; Getzov and Nagar 2002:34).

*Drop-Shaped Bottle* (Fig. 19:16).— An unusual drop-shaped alabastron is made of a creamish buff ware. No ceramic parallels were found for this bottle, but it is similar in form to an alabaster drop-shaped bottle from Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Fig. 11:15), raising the possibility that it may have been inspired by an Egyptian vessel form.

*Lamp* (Fig. 19:18).— A single lamp was uncovered in Cave C. This Middle Bronze Age lamp form was of long duration. Several similar lamps were found at Ginosar Caves 2/3, located around the heads of the deceased (Epstein 1974: Fig. 11:3–12). Whilst lamps are found in MB I tombs, they become more numerous in the course of MB II (Hallote 1995:116; Getzov and Nagar 2002:34).

*Bronze Artifacts* (Figs. 17:13; 20:1–5; 22:10, 11)

The bronze artifacts from Caves A, C and D attributable to the Middle Bronze Age consisted of six weapons and working tools, namely an arrowhead, a knife, two daggers, an axe-head and a spearhead, as well as two toggle pins and a few small bronze fragments. Although the fragments of preserved skeletal remains were not exposed in articulation, the position of the *in situ* bronze weapons, including the two daggers adjacent to their stone pommel heads, indicates that the deceased were interred in the caves with their personal weapons by their sides.

The bronze weapons are similar to weapons uncovered in many Middle Bronze Age tombs excavated in northern Israel, reflecting an additional facet of the communal material

culture in this period. Parallels to these weapons are found at Ginosar, Kefar Szold (Epstein 1974), Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996), Kefar Veradim, Kefar Jatt, Naḥal Yehi'am (Getzov and Nagar 2002) and Fassuṭa (Gershuny and Aviam 2010). A few similar weapons also came from Middle Bronze Age tombs in the precinct of the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth (Bagatti 1969). By contrast, bronze weapons were rare in burials at urban sites, such as in Ḥazor Tomb 1181 and in the tombs at Dan and Kabri (Getzov and Nagar 2002:46–47; see discussion, below).

The composition and the manufacturing process of the Nazareth bronze artifacts were not analyzed. The metallurgical examination of the spearheads and toggle-pin from the Middle Bronze Age tombs at Fassuṭa revealed that they were made of tin bronze, and that only the narrow shaft-hole axe-head was made of arsenic copper in continuation of the earlier Intermediate Bronze Age metallurgical tradition of alloying copper with arsenic (Shalev 2010).

The weapons from the Nazareth caves are presented here with reference to the typological classification developed by Philip (1989). Specific parallels to the Nazareth weapons are from a rich bronze assemblage from a burial cave at Zefat in the Upper Galilee (Damati and Stepansky 1996), Gesher in the Jordan Valley (Garfinkel and Bonfil 1990) and from Ginosar (Epstein 1974), as well as a few bronze weapons from the Middle Bronze Age tombs previously uncovered in Nazareth, in order to emphasize the presence of these artifacts within the Lower Galilee (Bagatti 1969; Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005). Other parallels are cited when relevant.

*Arrowhead* (Fig. 17:13).— A fragmentary arrowhead with a very thin leaf-shaped blade and a tapering tang was retrieved during the sieving process. This arrowhead type is common in Intermediate and Middle Bronze Age graves in the north of the country—for example, the Intermediate Bronze Age tomb near 'Enan (Eisenberg 1985: Fig. 9:49–51, and see parallels therein) and in the MB I Cave 2 at Kefar Veradim (Getzov and Nagar 2002: Fig. 16:4). As previously mentioned, it is possible that this arrowhead belongs to the earlier Intermediate Bronze Age burial in Cave A.

*Curved-Bladed Knife* (Fig. 20:1).— A single-edged knife features a thin blade with a curved cutting edge and three rivets, which attached it to a wooden handle (length 17.1 cm, max. width 2 cm). Philip (1989) classifies these knives as Curved-Bladed Knife Type 1, and dates their first appearance to the latter part of the MB I, though the bulk of these knives were found in MB II tombs (Philip 1989:141; Fig. 55 upper). He notes that they were probably used as pocket knives rather than as actual weapons. A similar knife came from Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996:15\*, Fig. 17:3).

*Narrow-Bladed Axe-Head* (Fig. 20:2).— This axe has a long, slim blade and a narrow cutting edge, with a notch and an ovoid socket for the handle (length 13.5 cm, socket hole  $3.2 \times 1.3$  cm). Similar axes have been found in MB I contexts throughout Israel and

the Lebanon coast (Philip 1989:37–40, Fig. 1: Narrow-bladed Axe Type 1). Examples of this type came from Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Figs. 7:15; 12:1, 2), from Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996:10\*, Fig. 11) and from Gesher (Garfinkel and Bonfil 1990: Fig. 5:10), all dating to the transitional MB I–II period.

*Daggers* (Fig. 20:3, 4).— The two daggers have long, broad blades and triangular-shaped tangs with three rivet holes arranged in a triangle. The plain-bladed dagger (length 18.6 cm, max. width 4.4 cm wide; Fig. 20:3) has MB I parallels at Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Figs. 12:3–5; 18:3–5). The veined dagger has a rounded midrib and converging ribs cast in relief on the blade surface and its three intact bronze rivets protrude equally on either side (length 23.4 cm, max. width 5 cm; rivets 1.6 cm long; Fig. 20:4). Ribbed daggers first appeared in MB I in Israel and Lebanon (Philip 1989:117–118, Fig. 37: Dagger Type 13; Damati and Stepansky 1996:13\*–15\*, Figs. 14, 16). Two plain and one ribbed dagger were found in the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth (Bagatti 1969: Fig. 211:5–7).

*Socketed Spearhead* (Fig. 22:10).— A medium-sized spearhead was found, with a raised mid-rib and a cleaved socket (length 8.6 cm, max. width 2.5 cm; socket diam. 0.08 cm). This type of spearhead developed in the late third millennium and is common during MB I–II in the southern Levant (Philip 1989:92–95, 99–100, Figs. 23, 24, Socketed Spearhead Types 7 and 8). Several examples of these small and medium-sized spearhead types found in burial caves in the Galilee support this date range, including Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Figs. 4:10; 7:14), Gesher (Garfinkel and Bonfil 1990: Fig. 1:5) and Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996:10\*–13\*, Figs. 12, 13).

*Toggle Pins* (Figs. 20:5; 22:11).— A long twisted toggle pin with a small centrally located eyelet (9 cm long) was found in Cave C (Fig. 20:5), and another non-perforated pin came from Cave D (Fig. 22:11). Toggle pins were a popular commodity in MB I and MB II tombs, and several similar twisted toggle pins were found at Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Fig. 13:1–8), Gesher (Garfinkel and Bonfil 1990: Fig. 2:8) and Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996:15\*–19\*, Figs. 18, 19).

*Limestone Pommels* (Fig. 20:6, 7)

Two spherical limestone pommel heads were found in Cave C, lying *in situ* about 8 cm from the tangs of their dagger blades (see Fig. 13); the intervening space is where the now-disintegrated wooden handle had been attached. The pommels are smoothed on the outside and have a central cavity for inserting the dagger handle. Both have one fully pierced side, whilst the other side is only half pierced in order to secure the handle. Similar limestone pommels were found in other Middle Bronze Age tombs, such as at Tur'an (Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005:14, Fig. 13:2), Ginosar (Epstein 1974: Fig. 18:3) and Zefat (Damati and Stepansky 1996:14\*, Fig. 16:1).

*Beads* (Fig. 22:12, 13)

Two beads found in Cave D were probably from the Middle Bronze Age burial. A square shell bead (Fig. 22:12;  $1.7 \times 1.7$  cm) made from the whorled apex of a *Conus* (Golani 2013: Shell Bead Type VI.2) is a type found throughout the ancient Near East as early as the Chalcolithic period (Reese 1986:324–326). The other (Fig. 22:13) is a small turquoise disk bead of siliceous material, possibly faience (Golani 2013: Siliceous Bead Type III.1).

**Iron Age**

The Iron Age assemblage in Cave D comprised many pottery vessels, several bronze bracelets, a few bronze earring fragments and a bone pendant.

*Pottery* (Figs. 23; 24; 25:1–10)

The Iron Age pottery (31 vessels) from Cave D comprised bowls, a chalice, storage jars, a cooking jug, jugs, juglets and lamps. Most of the vessels are of a homogeneous light brown or orangey-brown ware with medium-sized grits, while two narrow-necked juglets exhibit a more reddish color (Fig. 25:6, 7). A strikingly similar repertoire, also accompanied by bronze bracelets, was found in a transitional Iron IB–IIA burial cave excavated at Har Yona in Upper Nazareth, c. 4 km northeast of the excavation (Alexandre 2003). Another comparable pottery repertoire—although more fragmentary—was uncovered in another burial cave in Nazareth dated to late Iron I (Vitto 2001: see Fig. 1:2); in addition, several similar vessels from an Iron I pottery assemblage were from another burial cave in Nazareth with no exact provenance (Loffreda 1977).

As noted in the Har Yona publication, similar pottery repertoires were uncovered at stratified sites in the Nazareth hills and the fringes of the Jezreel Valley, including at nearby Tel Gat Ḥefer Stratum III (Alexandre, Covello-Paran and Gal 2003), Ta'anakh Period IB (Rast 1978: Fig. 11:7–11), 'Afula Stratum IIA (Dothan 1955: Fig. 3:11) and Tell Qiri Stratum VIII (Ben-Tor and Portugali 1987:130: Figs. 17:6; 32:1). Some similar vessels came from cist graves also attributed to the transitional Iron I–II period at Ḥorbat Menorim in the Lower Galilee (Braun 2001).

Whilst some of the Iron Age vessels such as the juglets exhibit forms that have a chronological range from the Iron IB to the Iron IIA, other vessels—for example, the oval-bodied storage jar forms from Strata VIA and VB Megiddo—are characteristic of Iron IB and not of Iron IIA, as they appear in Megiddo Stratum VIA and not later. Contemporary to the Har Yona burial cave, the presented Iron Age repertoire should also be attributed to the transitional Iron IB–IIA period (for parallels from additional stratified sites, see Alexandre 2003:185–186).

The parallels for the Iron Age vessels cited here are predominantly from the Har Yona burial cave. Other sites are mentioned as deemed relevant.

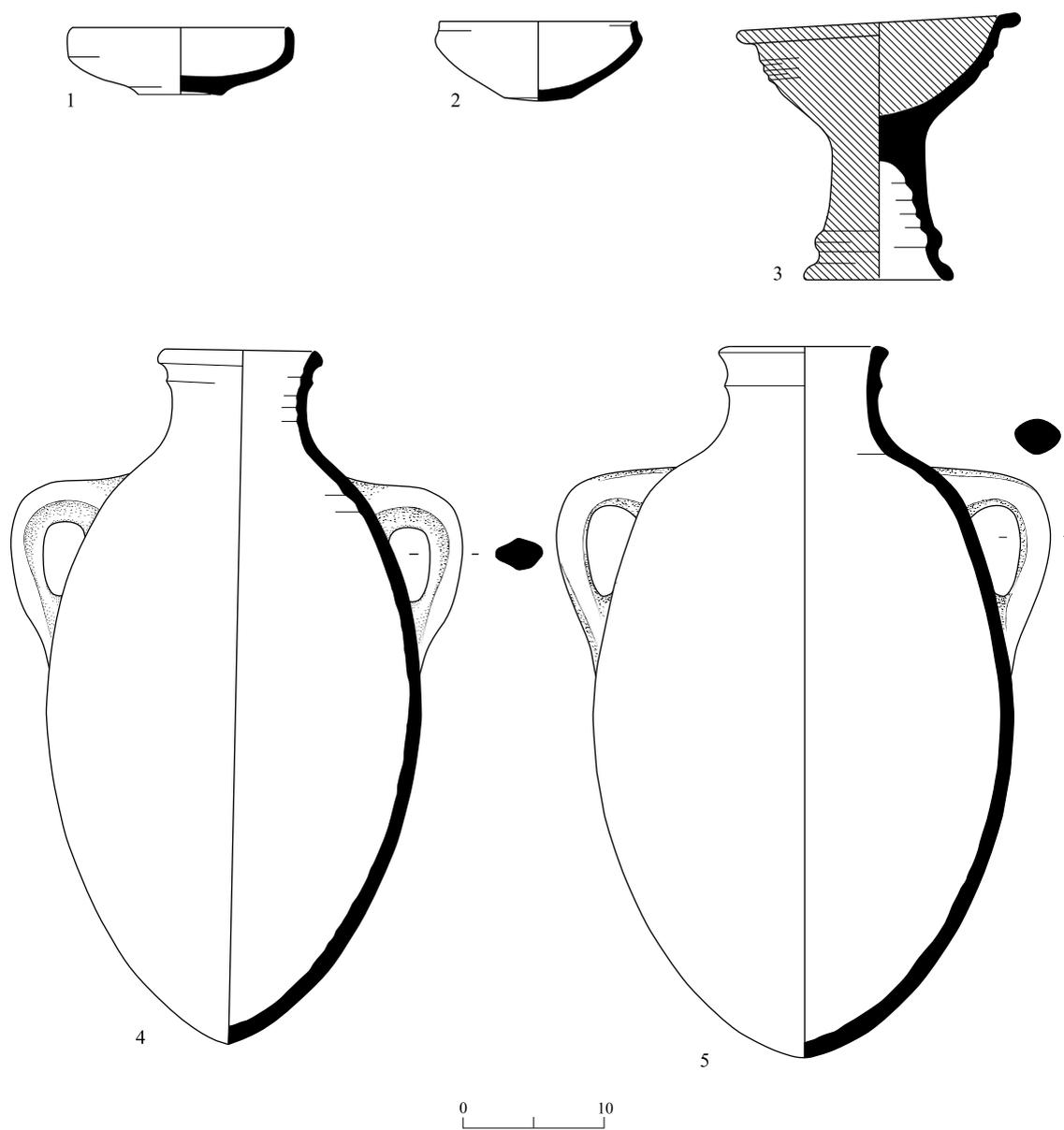


Fig. 23. Cave D, Iron Age pottery.

| No. | Vessel      | Locus | Basket | Description                   |
|-----|-------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------|
| 1   | Small bowl  | 108   | 1025   | Light brown, white grits      |
| 2   | Small bowl  | 108   | 1024   | Light brown, white grits      |
| 3   | Chalice     | 109   | 1043   | Brown, possible worn red slip |
| 4   | Storage jar | 108   | 1015   | Light brown                   |
| 5   | Storage jar | 110   | 1032   | Light brown                   |

*Carinated Bowls* (Fig. 23:1, 2).— Two small bowls have a flat or slightly concave base, a slight mid-body or a high-body carination and a simple rim. Similar bowls were uncovered at Har Yona (Alexandre 2003: Fig. 2:2–4).

*Chalice* (Fig. 23:3).— An intact chalice has a stepped foot, a rounded bowl with an everted flat rim and traces of red slip. Similar stepped chalices were found in Megiddo Tombs 39 and 76A (Guy 1938: Pls. 68:20; 74:25). A steeper sloping chalice bowl came from one of the Nazareth burial caves (Vitto 2001: Fig. 2:4, and see additional parallels therein).

*Storage Jars* (Figs. 23:4, 5; 24).— Most of the storage jars have oval-shaped bodies, rounded to pointed bases, high necks and handles from the shoulder to mid-body. The rims are thickened, and most exhibit a slight ridge below the rim. Similar storage jars were found in other burials from Nazareth (Loffreda 1977: Fig. 1; Vitto 2001: Fig. 2:5) and Har Yona (Alexandre 2003: Fig. 2:10–12). These jars are characteristic of the Iron I storage jars found in the north of the country. A single jar (Fig. 24:2), with a distinct shoulder, a high non-ridged neck and a thickened rim, is similar to Iron IIA high necked jars found at Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:50, e.g., Fig. III.84:3). The development of a pronounced shoulder on the jars is characteristic of Iron IIA and later.

*Cooking Jug* (Fig. 25:1).— A single wide-necked cooking jug is made of reddish brown cooking ware with calcite grits and shows evidence of burn-marks on the exterior. A fairly similar cooking jug came from the pottery assemblage from Nazareth (Loffreda 1977: Fig. 3:3). This cooking jug form was in use in Iron I and IIA assemblages (Gal and Alexandre 2000:42–43), though cooking vessels were uncommon in Iron Age burials (cf. Bloch-Smith 1992:38–39).

*Jug* (Fig. 25:2).— An unusually large plain jug has a ring base, a wide neck and a pinched mouth. Similar jugs appear in Megiddo Stratum VIB–VIA (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Pl. 6:155, 159) and are characteristic of Iron Age I–IIA (Gal and Alexandre 2000:55).

#### *Juglets*

*Dipper Juglets* (Fig. 25:3–5).— The relatively small dipper juglets have handles from rim to shoulder and wide necks, making them suitable for pouring liquid. Similar dipper juglets came from the Nazareth pottery assemblage (Loffreda 1977: Figs. 7; 8) and from Har Yona, where they were found inside the storage jars (Alexandre 2003:184, Fig. 2:5–7).

*Narrow-Necked Juglets* (Fig. 25:6, 7).— The narrow-necked juglets have a small globular body, a flat or button base, a long narrow neck and a handle from mid-neck to shoulder. They are manufactured from a more reddish ware than the other vessels. Their capacity is smaller than that of the dipper juglets and their narrow neck makes them less efficient for pouring, suggesting that they may have contained expensive liquids. Similar juglets were

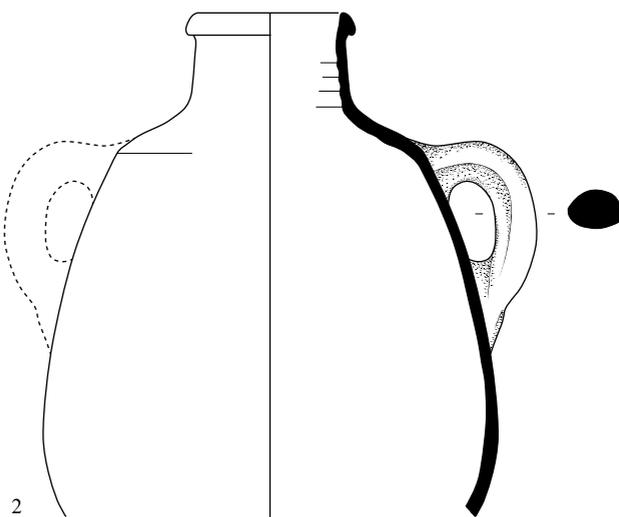
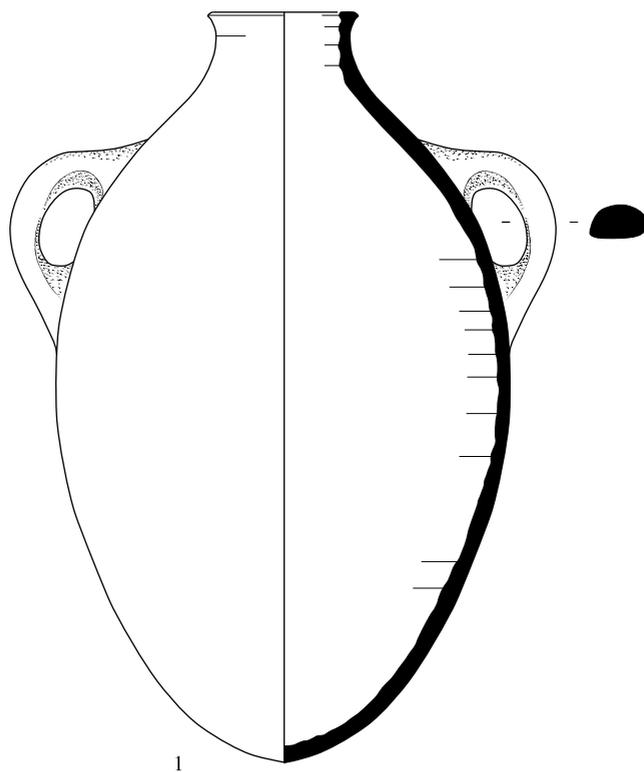


Fig. 24. Cave D, Iron Age storage jars.

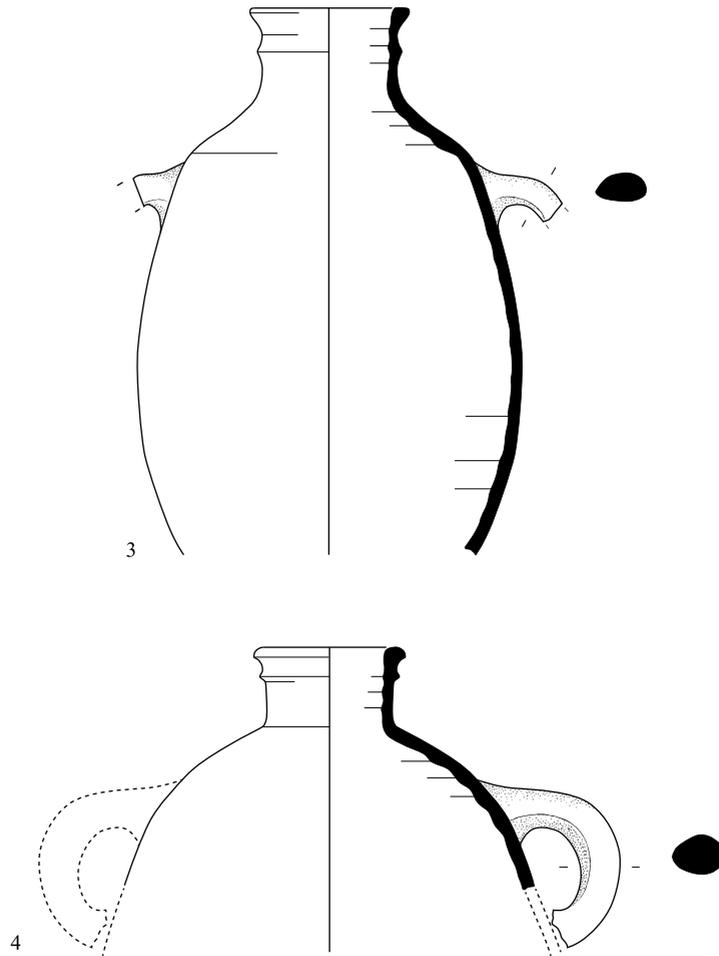


Fig. 24. (cont.)

| No. | Locus | Basket | Description    |
|-----|-------|--------|----------------|
| 1   | 108   | 1025   | Orangish brown |
| 2   | 108   | 1027/2 | Light brown    |
| 3   | 108   | 1009   | Light brown    |
| 4   | 108   | 1026   | Light brown    |

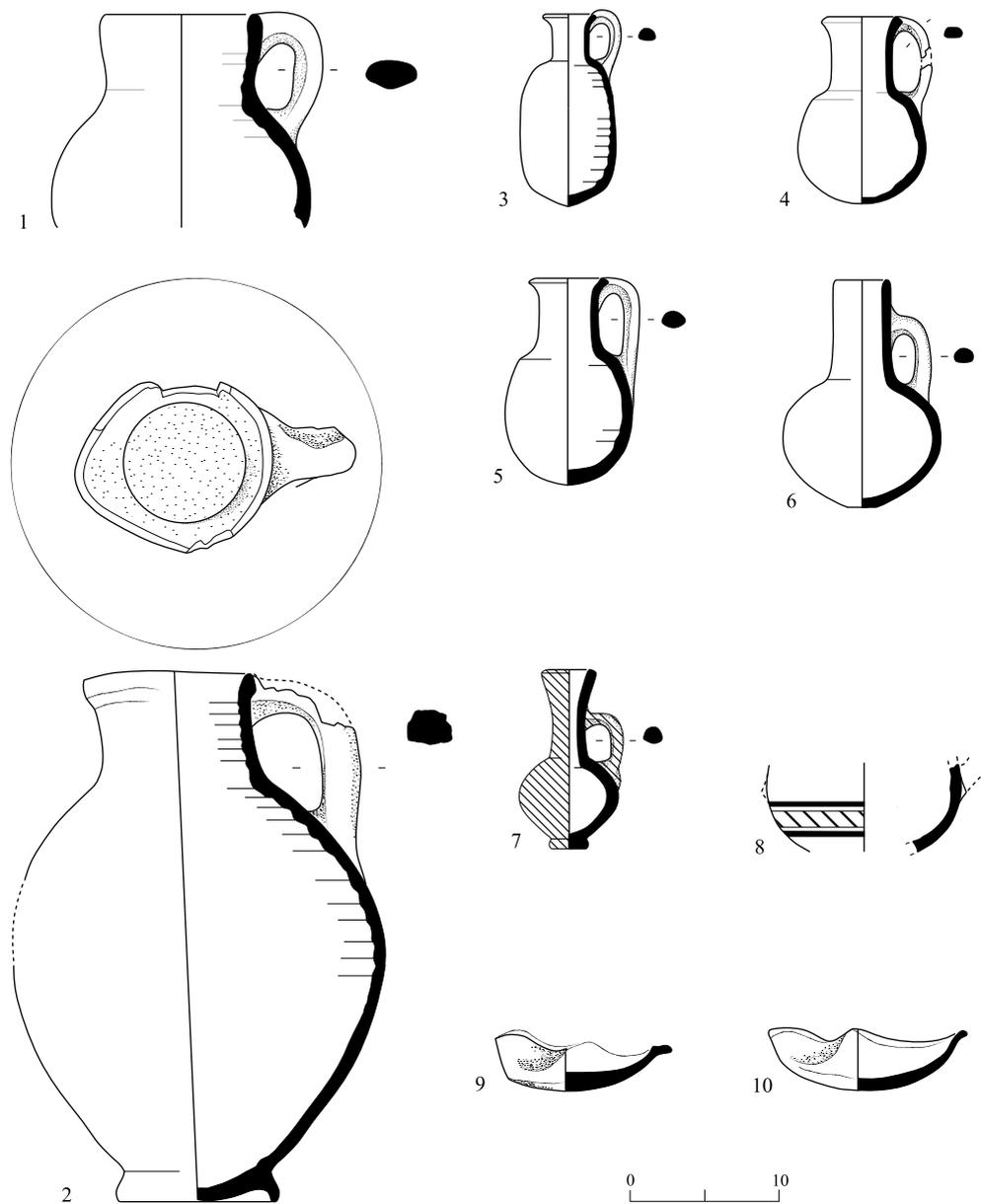


Fig. 25. Cave D, Iron Age pottery (1–10), metal bracelets (11, 12) and bone pendant (13).

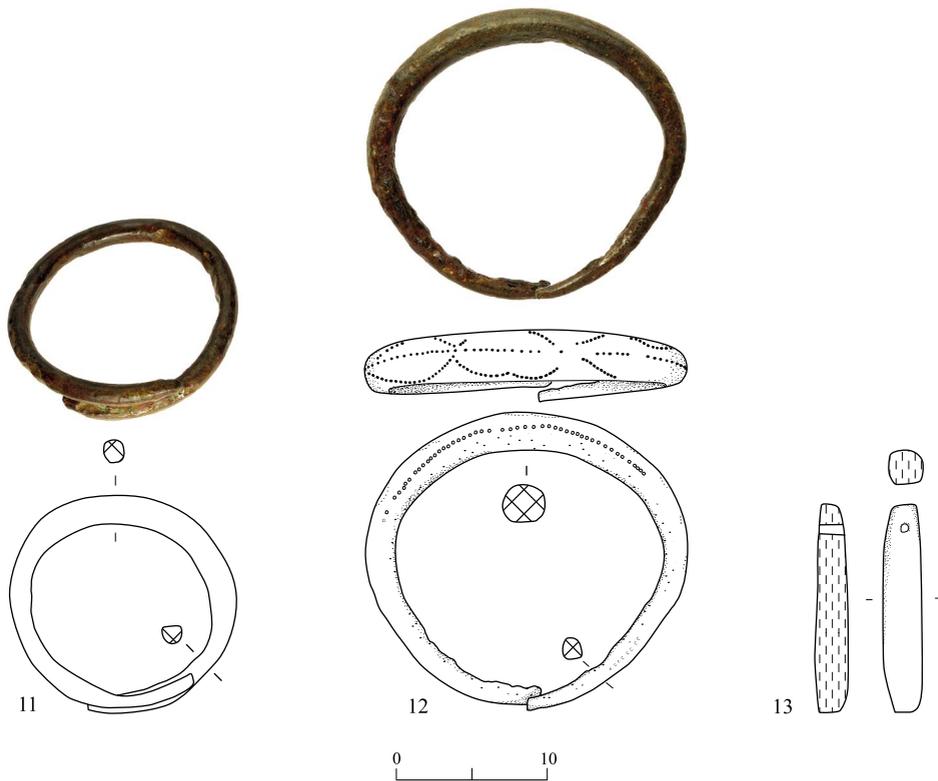


Fig. 25. (cont.)

| No. | Vessel      | Locus | Basket | Description                         |
|-----|-------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| 1   | Cooking jug | 108   | 1019   | Reddish brown, grits, burned        |
| 2   | Jug         | 108   | 1024/1 | Reddish brown                       |
| 3   | Juglet      | 108   | 1015/4 | Orangish brown                      |
| 4   | Juglet      | 108   | 1023   | Orangish brown                      |
| 5   | Juglet      | 110   | 1035   | Light brown                         |
| 6   | Juglet      | 108   | 1020/1 | Reddish brown                       |
| 7   | Juglet      | 112   | 1060   | Reddish brown                       |
| 8   | Body sherd  | 110   | 1030   | Brown with black lines and red band |
| 9   | Lamp        | 109   | 1044   | Light brown                         |
| 10  | Lamp        | 110   | 1034   | Reddish brown                       |
| 11  | Bracelet    | 112   | 1066   | Bronze                              |
| 12  | Bracelet    | 109   | 1037   | Bronze                              |
| 13  | Pendant     | 109   | 1054   | Bone                                |

found in the Har Yona burial, where they were made of the same reddish ware (Alexandre 2003: Fig. 2:8, 9).

*Phoenician Bichrome Sherd* (Fig. 25:8).— A body sherd decorated with a red band bordered by black lines was the only decorated ware in the assemblage, and probably came from a Phoenician Bichrome jug (Gal and Alexandre 2000:57–58).

*Lamps* (Fig. 25:9, 10).— The simple pinched lamps have thickened bases and are characteristic of Iron Age I–IIA. Similar Iron Age lamps were found in the burials in Nazareth (Loffreda 1977: Fig. 3:6) and at Har Yona (Alexandre 2003:13).

### *Bronze Artifacts*

The Iron Age metal artifacts in Cave D consisted of twelve bracelets or large rings and small fragments of plain broken earrings.

*Bracelets or Large Rings* (Figs. 25:11, 12; 26).— Twelve large rings made of a copper alloy were found in the Iron I burial layer in Cave D. Some are open-ended, whilst others have overlapping ends; their diameters range between 5.6 and 8.4 cm, most with diameters of 6.5–7.5 cm. Similar plain large rings with a rounded cross section were found on the arm and leg bones of articulated skeletons in the Har Yona burial cave (Alexandre 2003:186–187, Fig. 3:1–3), and three similar large rings were also found amongst the Iron I grave goods from Nazareth (Loffreda 1977: Fig. 6:7, 8, 10).

All the large rings are plain with tapering or squared-off ends, apart from one that was decorated with closely placed small and rounded punch marks arranged in a long, wide arc along the side of the hoop, and an additional line of punch marks and successive linked ovals along the outer edge of the ring (Fig. 25:12). These items are distinctive not only for their peculiar mode of decoration but also for their much thicker lower portion, causing the ring to be lopsided in form, which suggests that it may have functioned as a large earring or nose-ring (Golani 2013: Earring Type I.2b). Such rings with pricked dot decorations appear to have been characteristic of the Galilee, the central highland regions and Transjordan during late Iron I and early Iron II. Parallels were found in the Har Yona tomb (Alexandre 2003: Fig. 3), Tomb 6 at eṭ-Ṭaiyiba (Yannai 2002: Fig. 11:4, 5), Tomb 65 at Khirbat Nisya (Livingston 2002: Fig. 6:1, 5, 7, 10), a tomb at Khirbat Abu-Musarah (Golani 2004: Pl. 13:1), Tombs 3 and 3a at el-Jib (Dajani 1953: Pl. 10:38), the Philistine tomb at Tel 'Eṭun (Edelstein and Auran 1992: Figs. 7 [top left]; 12:10), a tomb at Sahab in Jordan (Dajani



Fig. 26. Cave D, Iron Age I, twelve bracelets/large rings.

1970: Pls. 21: S.A. 327, 333, 340, 341, 343, 344; 22: S.A.334) and tombs in the Baq'ah Valley in Jordan (McGovern 1986: Pl. 32). The example from the Philistine tomb at Tel 'Eṭun has a nearly identical decorative scheme to the present example, though the former is semicircular in cross section unlike the Nazareth example which is circular.

#### *Bone Pendant* (Fig. 25:13)

A single plain bone pendant with a small perforation at one end for hanging was probably associated with the Iron I burial. A similar bone pendant was uncovered in the Iron Age tomb excavated at Har Yona (Alexandre 2003:5, mistakenly identified there as a perforated rod or needle), and another, similar pendant from an Iron Age burial in Nazareth was made of pottery with a slightly more club-shaped form (Vitto 2001: Fig. 4:1). These pendants, usually made of bone or ivory and decorated with incised bands, lattice-work or rings and dots, are quite common in the southern Levant, where they appear in the eleventh century BCE and continue to be used in the seventh century BCE (Golani 2013:170–174, Bone Pendant Type III.1). Vitto reports that these Iron Age pendants have been found at many sites throughout Israel, and have been interpreted as toggles for dress-fastenings or as artifacts for rhabdomancy, i.e., divination by rods (Vitto 2001:164–165, with parallels therein).

### DATING AND CONCLUSIONS

Each of the four partially preserved caves comprised a vertical shaft and a central burial chamber; two of the caves (B and C) also featured an additional small side chamber cut into the wall of the central chamber. All the caves were hewn for burials in the Intermediate Bronze Age, although it is possible that some changes, such as the addition of the side chambers and the makeshift rock treads in the shaft of Cave C, were carried out in the Middle Bronze Age.

#### *Intermediate Bronze Age*

The Intermediate Bronze Age deceased were laid directly on bedrock with accompanying ceramic vessels. In Cave A, these burials may have been partitioned by fieldstones found in the overlying layer around the walls of the chamber. The extant pottery, albeit limited and fragmentary, aligns with the ceramic repertoires from contemporary Intermediate Bronze Age cemeteries, such as Ha-Zore'a and Megiddo (Guy 1938; Meyerhof 1989). In addition, some vessels exhibit characteristics of assemblages from small rural settlements in the same geographical region, such as 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 2009). The Intermediate Bronze Age burials from Nazareth thus conform to the material culture of the adjacent Jezreel Valley in this period.

The four burial caves were reused in the transitional MB I–II period after clearing out the earlier grave goods—although some broken vessels and sherds were overlooked. A couple of Intermediate Bronze Age jugs and jars, found together with the Middle Bronze Age pottery in tombs excavated in the nearby precinct of the Church of the Annunciation

in Nazareth, reflect a similar reuse (Bagatti 1969:258–267; Figs. 210:15; 211:18, 19; 213:9 Tombs 1, 7 and 80). Indeed, the reuse of Intermediate Bronze Age burial caves in the Middle Bronze Age is well-attested in the archaeological record, possibly for pragmatic reasons, or reflecting the continuity of family and clan practices (Dever 1975:34; Hallote 1995:103–111; Getzov and Nagar 2002:46–47). There was, nonetheless, a clear chronological gap in the use of burial caves in the early part of MB I.

### *Middle Bronze Age*

The Middle Bronze Age deceased were laid in the central and side chambers of the caves. Whilst the extant skeletal material attests to the presence of two to four deceased interred in each burial cave, the minimum number of individuals could not be estimated due to the damaged state of the caves and the poor preservation of the skeletal material (Table 1). The few cattle and caprid bones found in the caves are to be attributed to Middle Bronze Age mortuary offerings.

The clusters of Middle Bronze Age pottery vessels found with the fragmentary human bones located around the walls of the central chambers and in the side chambers suggests that the deceased were interred with a standard burial kit consisting of bowls, juglets and one or more storage jars, presumably containing provisions intended to provide sustenance (Hallote 1995:114). The placement of the deceased's personal weapon at his side may reflect his warrior occupation or social status (Hallote 1995:112). In Chamber 502 in Cave C, the bones of at least three adult individuals (MNI), both male and female, were attested, and two daggers, an axe-head and a toggle pin were found, possibly corroborating the attribution of weapons to males and the pins to females.

Getzov and Nagar have observed that the presence of several bronze weapons in burials is characteristic of Middle Bronze Age tombs associated with rural sites, and by contrast, the intramural burials under house floors that first appear and predominate in the Middle Bronze Age urban centers (e.g., at Dan and Kabri) are mostly void of weapons (Getzov and Nagar 2002:46–47). Both rural and urban burials exhibit similar pottery repertoires during this period. On the basis of these observations, they deduce that the local rural population retained the earlier Intermediate Bronze Age burial customs, including the placing of weapons in tombs, whilst the new urban population brought new burial traditions from Syria and possibly from Mesopotamia (Getzov and Nagar 2002:46–47, and see references therein). According to this model, it would seem that the Middle Bronze Age burials at Nazareth must have been associated with a rural site not yet uncovered.

Notwithstanding the differences between the rural and urban sites, the artifact types from the Nazareth tombs conform to the types found in Middle Bronze Age burials and domestic sites spread widely across the north of the country. These assemblages are conclusively attributable to the transitional MB I–II period on the basis of comparable assemblages. The presence of some imported Cypriot wares in the tombs indicates that the rural sites of the Lower Galilee had interest in, and access to, imported luxury goods.

The unique arrangement of the small bowls and juglet inserted inside the broken storage jar found in Cave C remains enigmatic, even if the adult long bone found in the same context is considered intrusive. Whilst the practice of intramural infant burials in jars under house floors is a well-attested custom in Middle Bronze Age cities, jar burials in caves near rural sites are not common. In addition, whilst dipper juglets used for ladling are found in storage jars in Middle Bronze Age burials, this combination of vessels found in the broken storage jar is unparalleled. It is unfortunate that this burial chamber was opened after the excavation prior to the archaeological supervision of the subsequent earthworks, and thus was not fully recorded.

The Middle Bronze Age rural settlement of Nazareth has not been uncovered, but taking into account the constrictive, hilly local topography, it was almost certainly located underneath the present-day town center, in the vicinity of the Church of the Annunciation precinct, between the Middle Bronze Age necropolis and the Nazareth spring (Fig. 1).

### *Iron Age*

Regarding the third and final burial phase, the shaft of Cave D must have remained visible on the surface several hundred years later. The reuse of Cave D in the Iron Age was most likely for the pragmatic reason of minimal effort, and cannot reflect ancestral relations with the Middle Bronze Age deceased due to the long chronological gap. The Iron Age people did not entirely remove the earlier Middle Bronze Age pottery; most metal artifacts were probably removed.

The similarity of the Iron Age pottery in Cave D to other burial repertoires excavated in Nazareth (Loffreda 1977; Vitto 2001), and especially to the Har Yona burial cave in Upper Nazareth (Alexandre 2003), points to attributing the burial in Cave D to the transitional Iron IB–IIA period. The presence of similar metal bracelets and bone pendants in both the Nazareth and the adjacent Har Yona burial caves points to additional facets of a shared material culture.

Regarding the possible location of the Iron Age settlement associated with the Nazareth burials, a few Iron Age vessels were retrieved from bell-shaped rock-cut silos excavated in the Church of the Annunciation precinct that may have been part of the basement floors of Iron Age houses (Fig. 1; Bagatti 1969:44, 57, 269–272, Figs. 211, 214, Silo Nos. 22, 57, see Plate XI for location). In addition, a single stone wall uncovered immediately west of the Church of the Annunciation precinct is attributed to the Iron IIA on the basis of a few sherds (Alexandre, forthcoming). The early Iron Age occupation was probably a small settlement located in the area between the Iron Age burials and the spring, and likely is one of several small Iron Age I settlements identified in surveys along the Nazareth ridge (Gal 1992: Figs. 6.1; 7.2). The similarity of the transitional Iron IB–IIA pottery assemblages to the subsequent Iron IIA ceramic repertoires that were found at all the major tell sites in northern Israel points to a continuous settlement process that evolved into the fully fledged Iron II urban settlement of northern Israel.

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