

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS FROM THE MAGEN AVRAHAM COMPOUND, YAFO (JAFFA)

YOSSI NAGAR

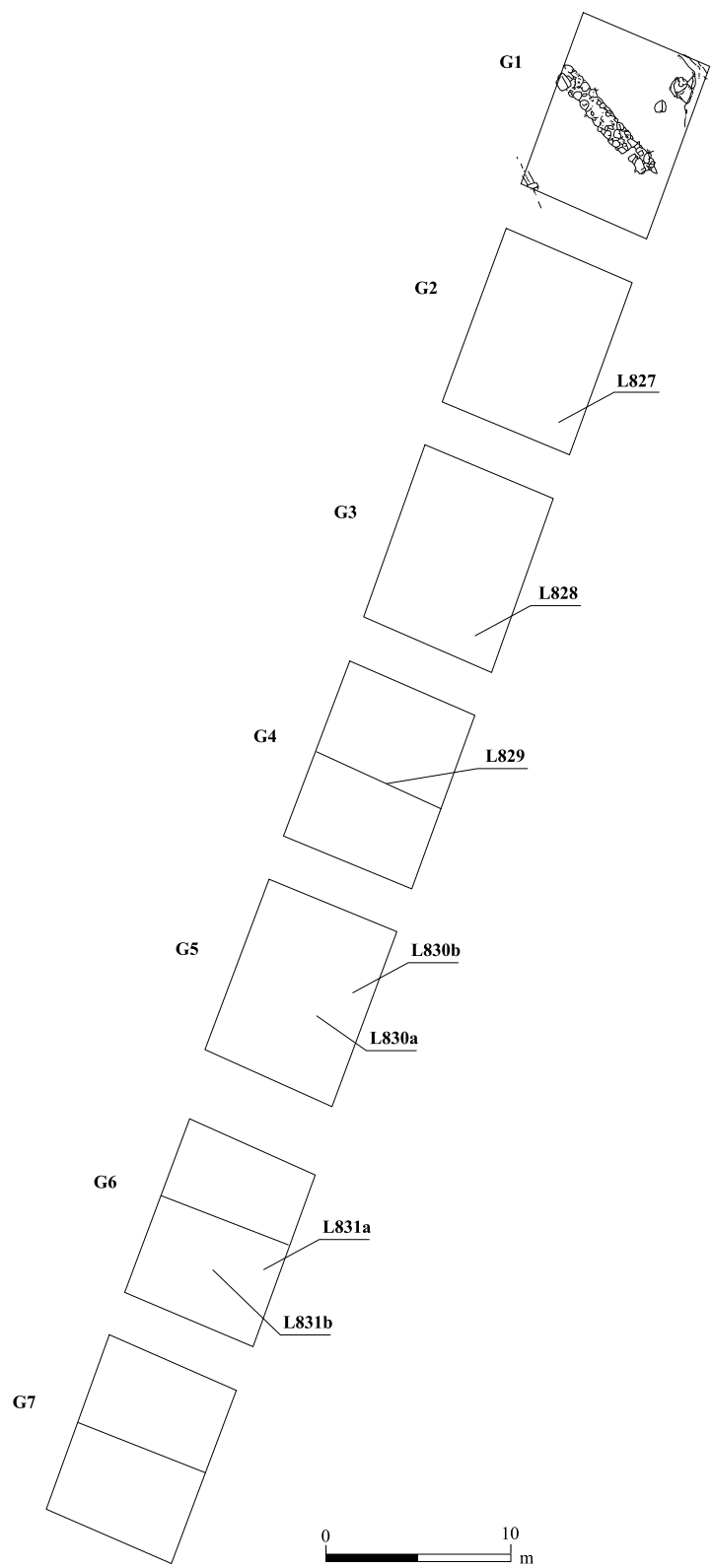
INTRODUCTION

Human skeletal remains in a very poor state of preservation were found on No'am Street, during the excavation in the Magen Avraham Compound (see Arbel and Rauchberger, this volume). The remains were scattered in several of the excavation squares along the northern part of the street (Area G, Stratum III; Plan 1). As the grave layout could not be discerned for any of the remains, and as the bones were found without burial goods, their chronological attribution is problematic. The remains were examined *in situ*, with no further laboratory work. The age at death of the skeletons was estimated by means of epiphyseal closure and dental wear (Hillson 1986), and their sex was determined based on skull morphology and measurements of the femoral bone (Bass 1987:82, 220); further details on the methodology used here can be found in the anthropological report in the IAA Archives (Permit No. A-6610).

THE FINDS

Locus 827

Four concentrations of human bones were unearthed in this locus: (1) in the western part of the locus, partially articulated remains, including a fragmentary skull vault, a mandible, cervical vertebrae, a humerus and ribs were found, representing a disturbed primary burial of a 20–30 year old male individual in an east–west orientation, head in the west; (2) in the eastern part of the locus was a fragmentary skull vault and a lower jaw, possibly a primary burial of a 20–40 year old individual in an east–west orientation, head in the west (additional remains of this skeleton were present but not exposed); (3) in the southern part of the locus, articulated remains, including a femur, a fibula and two tibiae, were found, representing a primary burial of an adult individual over 20 years old at the time of death in an east–west orientation, head in the west; (4) also found in the southern part of the locus were the partially articulated remains—including a skull vault, a mandible, cervical vertebra and a proximal humerus—of a primary burial of an individual aged 20–30 years at the time of death in an east–west orientation, head in the west. The sex of individuals 2–4 could not be determined.



Plan 1. Distribution of the skeletal remains along the northern part of No'am Street (Area G).

Locus 828

This locus comprised the remains of a lower limb and pelvic fragments, representing a female aged over 20 years at the time of death.

Locus 829

The remains in this locus include a skull vault, a lower jaw and unidentifiable postcranial fragments, representing an individual aged 20–40 years whose sex could not be determined. The partial articulation of some of the bones indicates a disturbed primary burial in an east–west orientation, head in the west.

Locus 830a

The remains here include a lower jaw and long-bone fragments, representing a male individual aged 20–35 years at the time of death. The partial articulation of some of the bones indicates a disturbed primary burial in an east–west orientation, the position of the head undetermined.

Locus 830b

These remains include the diaphysis of a tibia and a tarsal bone, representing an adult individual whose age at death and sex could not be determined.

Locus 831a

A partial skull vault, found in the easternmost part of the excavation, possibly represents a burial of an adult, 15–30 years old, in an east–west orientation, with the head in the west; the sex could not be determined. Additional bones, found in a concentration in the southern part of this locus, include a skull vault and unidentifiable postcranial fragments, representing an adult male individual, older than 20 years.

Locus 831b

These remains include a femur diaphysis, representing an adult individual whose age at death and sex could not be determined.

CONCLUSIONS

The skeletal remains on No'am Street in the Magen Avraham Compound represent at least 10 adult individuals, of which three are males and one a female. Some of the bones were found scattered, while others were anatomically articulated, arranged in an east–west orientation with the head in the west. The articulated remains indicate intentional primary burials, possibly in simple pit graves. The orientation of the bodies is not indicative of the burial practice of any particular religion. The concentration of several burials at this location indicates the presence of a larger burial field in this part of Yafo, which was likely disturbed by modern agricultural and building activities. Further excavation is needed to elucidate the nature of this cemetery.

REFERENCES

- Arbel Y. and Rauchberger L. This volume. Remains from the Hellenistic through the Late Ottoman–British Mandate Periods at the Magen Avraham Compound, Yafo (Jaffa).
- Bass W.M. 1987. *Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual* (3rd ed.). Columbia, Mo.
- Hillson S. 1986. *Teeth*. Cambridge.