

Dear readers,

This special volume of the Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology (Vol. 3) is mainly devoted to the archaeological-historical research of caves in Israel. It is split into two issues. The first and present issue consists of five articles, including a substantial contribution from neighboring Turkey and an overview of the Holy Scriptures. The next, to be published at the end of the year, will include six additional papers.

The scientific research of the country's cave sites was prompted by the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls concealed in the Qumran caves and the impressive archaeological finds from the Bar Kokhba refuge caves. Famously, while thousands of scholars continuously researched the Dead Sea scrolls and other documents discovered in the refuge caves, very few scholars recognized the need to study the "vaults" that had preserved them so well, namely the caves themselves.

Since the establishment in the late 1970s of Israel's Cave Research Center, now part of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Earth Sciences, the study of cave sites has increased and intensified, greatly expanding our understanding of their formation, their extent, their characteristic nature, and their distribution. The acknowledgment that natural and artificial caves have been used throughout human history, coupled with the classification and study of the refuge caves, Judean hiding complexes, and Galilean hiding complexes and cliff shelters, has substantiated cave research in Israel as a distinct discipline. In the process, the remarkable diversity of functions fulfilled by these facilities became apparent: housing and shelter, prehistoric dwelling, burial, industry, caching coin hoards and other precious objects, and providing refuge from imminent disasters and hostile threats.

For the sake of discussion, we may distinguish two cave types in Israel: natural caves and artificial caves. Natural caves are formed by karstic activity at cliff tops, on mountainous slopes, and beneath the surface. Caverns of this type are found throughout the country, with the sole exception of the basalt-covered regions of the Golan Heights. Some natural caves were used for habitation and shelter in prehistoric times, and many were used as refuge caves. As mentioned above, the latter were extensively explored, providing detailed information and finds pertaining to the revolts against the Romans. In the Galilee, these natural caves are cliff shelters after their proximity to Jewish settlements of the Second Temple period and in order to distinguish them from refuge caves that are not necessarily adjacent to any settlement.



Artificial caves were deliberately hewn for various purposes, such as storage, industry, burial, water collection, and ritual. Over the past 50 years, there has been growing scientific interest in these caves' transformation into hiding complexes. Rock-cut passages connecting the caves' various chambers and facilities, the findings they produced—e.g., ritual baths, coins, and stone vessel fragments—and these facilities' close historical links to the writings of Josephus demonstrate that they were used by Jews in times of distress. Additionally, some hiding complexes were expressly hewn and used for the task; most were dated to the revolts against the Romans, and many were used during the Bar Kokhba rebellion.

This volume presents a selection of articles on both natural and artificial caves and the archaeological finds they contained. It is published in two issues, the first of which offers the following articles:

Yoav Farhi's article presents a rare bronze finger ring found by curious teenagers over half a century ago in a burial cave in the Naḥal David cliffs. Although exceptional, the ring received little attention at the time. Farhi's reexamination shows that the symbol on it is attributable to Mattathias Antigonus, discusses its date, and muses on the symbol's significance and relation to the coins of Antigonus.

Eitan Klein and his co-authors report on three hiding complexes discovered at biblical Tel Lavnin. They demonstrate that these complexes provide archaeological and structural evidence for the defense methods used by the Jewish population during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. They also feature two hitherto unknown architectural elements: stone-lined crawlways and stone-lined shafts.

Avihai Shvitiel's article provides a concise summary of the caves mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, how they were used, and the etymologies of the relevant terms.

Achia Kohn-Tavor reports the results of a salvage excavation on the Mount of Olives. He presents three chronological chapters and describes some of the daily activities of the residents of ancient Jerusalem on the city's outskirts.

Ali Yamaç, head of the OBRUK Cave Research Group in Turkey, describes in his article the vast scope of "underground cities" in Cappadocia, Turkey. Yamaç, who surveyed and documented 33 underground cities, underscores their defensive purposes but also stresses the various ways in which they functioned in times of peace.

I hope you will enjoy this volume,

Prof. Yinon Shvitiel, Zefat Academic College, I.C.R.C

Volume editor