ONE PHILISTINE'S TRASH IS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST'S TREASURE: Feasting at Iron Age I, Tell es-Safi/Gath

Aerial view of Tell es-Safi/Gath and Areas A and E (looking west). Photograph by Skyview Inc.

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Feasting events may serve a diverse set of social, political and/or economic functions. Acknowledgement of the important role they played in past societies is reflected in the plethora of publications reporting occurrences of feasting in the Levantine archaeological record. These range in time from the Epi-Paleolithic through the Iron Age and have been reported primarily from ritual contexts (e.g., Goring-Morris and Horwitz 2007; Lev-Tov and McGeough 2007; Zuckerman 2007; Twiss 2008; Ben-Shlomo et al. 2009; Munro and Grosman 2010; London 2011).

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FEASTING

The identification of feasting events in the archaeological record has relied upon a fairly consistent repertoire of features that relate to four crucial elements identified by Hayden (2001) based on the ethnographic literature on feasts: (a) it is a communal event; (b) it is time- and place-specific and occurs in celebration of a distinctive occasion; (c) it entails the sharing of food/beverage that are consumed in unusually large quantities; (d) it often entails the consumption of unusual types of food/beverage (notably, both points (c) and (d) are scaled relative to those "normally" ingested on a daily basis). These features are manifested in the archaeological record as:

(i) Locations with evidence of large or unusual food storage facilities; proximity to cooking/food preparation facilities such as hearths or ovens; presence of special consumption and/or disposal areas such as pits.

(ii) Regarding the quantity of remains, feasting entails extremely large numbers of food residues and cooking and/or consumption vessels.

(iii) Regarding the quality of remains, feasting includes cooking and/or serving vessels of unusual size; large quantities of standard-sized vessels used for consumption; the presence of rare or prestige objects or remains and/or those associated with ritual.

(iv) Special features exhibited by faunal remains are: a narrow range of faunal species, a bias in skeletal element representation, a selected age cohort, the presence of butchery marks and/or burning on the bones indicative of food preparation, and a relative absence of carnivore or rodent damage indicating rapid interment in the pit.

Given the ambivalence in interpreting many of these features by themselves, as noted by Ben-Shlomo et al. (2009: 131), "strong evidence for feasting thus requires the accumulation of multiple lines of evidence." We present here a case study of an Iron Age I feasting locale in Area A at Tell es-Safi/Gath. Features found include unique architecture and installations in a circumscribed lo-

Figure 1. Map of the eastern Mediterranean with sites mentioned in the text. Drawing by Jay Rosenberg.

cation, the existence of hearths, and the presence of pits containing a rich array of animal bones, ceramic vessels, and symbolic objects. We argue that the purpose of feasting activity was to strengthen social bonds and maintain, and create, community identity, demonstrate ownership and mobilization of resources, and that it was an elite activity, emblematic of social status (Fox 2012).

THE TELL ES-SAFI/GATH FEASTING LOCALE

Area A at Tell es-Safi/Gath is the primary zone of excavation located on the eastern terrace of the site (e.g. Maeir 2012; opening photograph). The total excavated area extends, at a maximum, 50 m east to west and 30 m north to south, although the area under discussion here is a roughly 225 m^2 situated in the center of Area A. The topography of this area is undulating and the features under discussion date from the twelfth to the tenth centuries B.C.E.

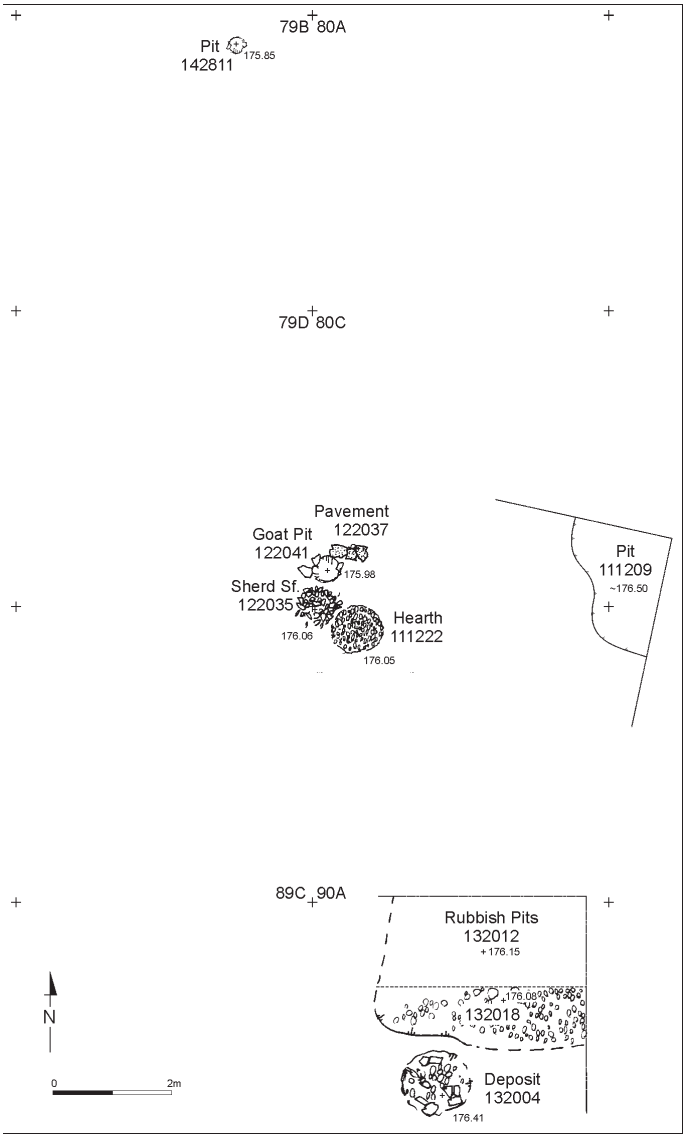
As in many other parts of the early Iron Age Mediterranean (fig. 1), including Greece and Crete, the early Philistine layers in Area A suggest a small-scale village-based society, in the context of what may be a larger urban entity, where an emerging elite drew on multiple spheres of authority, including feasting activity, to maintain their status and strengthen social bonds (cf. Fox 2012: 33). Among the earliest architectural remains in Area A dating to the eleventh through tenth centuries B.C.E., was a rectangular structure that went through a series of additions and rebuildings (fig. 2). The oldest wall (W53015) of this early structure was constructed of large, partially worked stones. It was reused with a westward extension of smaller stones placed above it. This extension turned south and a door socket was added as was the west wall (W33046), followed by two distinct sections of an east–west wall on the south (W43511 and W111217), which abut each other. A spur wall (W63063) consisting of a single row of stones was then added at the northeast end (W111217). The full extent of this building (not completely depicted here) remains unknown as it was disturbed by the ninth century B.C.E. construction of larger-scale houses.

Our attempts to define the westward extent of the southern wall (W43511) of the tenth century B.C.E. building uncovered a series of associated installations and deposits, which formed an activity area covering approximately 6 m^2. These features lie in a well-stratified layer about 30 cm thick, beneath a ninth century wall (W23031). They include (fig. 3): (i) a pebbled hearth; (ii) a pavement preserving broad chisel marks; (iii) a sherd surface that may have served as a type of heating element; (iv) a pit containing the remains of an immature male goat; and (v) the remains of a chalk plaster surface. (vi) To the east and south of these installations over the rest of the area under discussion were several other associated pits containing a mixture of fauna, decorated ceramics, and symbolic objects.

(i) Hearth

Among at least a half-dozen hearths excavated in neighboring parts of Area A, the best documented was the pebbled hearth (L111222) mentioned above, the first of these features uncovered. It was composed of a shallow (4.5 cm), ovoid depression (0.80 m north/south x 0.89 m east/west) filled with 1–2 layers of burned pebbles in a matrix of soft grey ash (Gur-Arieh et al. 2014). The thin layer of soil above and south of the hearth contained an IR I/II sherd and a fragment of an early Iron Age IIA red burnished ware bowl. On the hearth itself, we found a fragile and fragmentary clay sealing (B1112153) beneath a large, burnt sherd, which also covered one large cluster of carbonized grape seeds. These were 14C dated at the D-REAMS radiocarbon laboratory (Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot) using the procedure described in Yizhaq et al. (2007). The sample RTT 5940 was dated 2850+/-50 14C year BP, which calibrated, gives a range of 1110–930 (±1σ) and 1200–900 (±2σ) B.C.E. (calibration based on Bronk Ramsey 2013; Reimer et al. 2013) (fig. 4).

Though fragmentary, the sealing depicts an abstract stick-figure of an anthropomorph striding near a quadruped (fig. 5; Keel 2013: 122–23, no. 60). According to Keel (ibid.), this sealing dates to Iron Age IIA (ca. 980–800 B.C.E.). Based on 14C dating of the grape seeds from this context, a tenth century B.C.E. date for this stratum can be confirmed – the earlier phase of appearance of this sealing type.



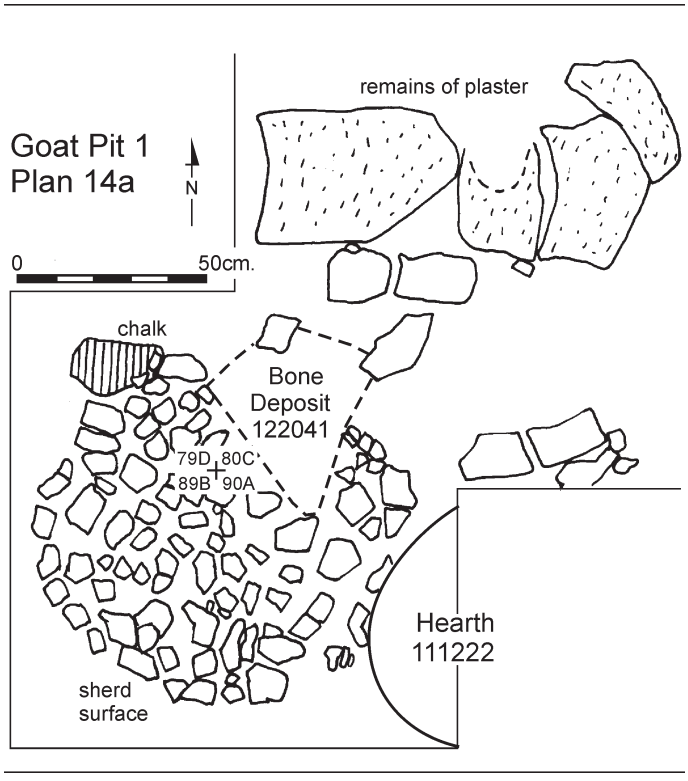


Figure 2 (left). Plan of Area A marked with the location of various features mentioned in the text.
Arrangement by Jay Rosenberg, Sharon Staub, Dean Smith, and Brent Davis.
Figure 3 (above). Plan of hearth (111222), pavement (122037), sherd surface (122035), and goat pit (122041).
Arrangement by Jay Rosenberg, Jason Adams, and Brent Davis.
Figure 4 (below). Elisabetta Boaretto sampling the 10th century hearth (111222).
Photograph by Louise A. Hitchcock.

Figure 5 (top left). Bulla (1112153) from 10th century B.C.E. hearth (111222). Photograph by Richard Wiskin.
Figure 6 (top right). View of pavement (122037) and sherd surface (122035). Photograph by Richard Wiskin.
Figure 7 (below). View of Amanda Rose Boucher (left) and Liora Horwitz (right) excavating Goat Pit 1 (122041). Photograph by Louise A. Hitchcock.

The hearth (L111222) is a well-known type of installation, which is characteristic of numerous other hearths uncovered at Tell es-Safi/Gath and at Tel Miqne-Ekron, with pebble construction. This type of construction is distinct from coastal Philistine sites and such construction techniques are not attested in the Aegean (Maeir and Hitchcock 2011). The pebbled hearths at Tell es-Safi/Gath tend to occur outdoors, while at Ekron they are found both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor hearths are unusual in the Mycenaean world, but are found on Crete, the Cyclades, and on Cyprus. Most Aegean hearths were made of clay, and the closest Aegean parallel to the Philistine pebbled hearth is found only in the Phase 4 hearths at Tiryns and at Korakou, which were made of pebbles and sherds, always with clay over them (Stockhammer 2009; Shear 1968: 446). The closest parallel of an external hearth is found on Cyprus at Maa-*Palaeokastro* in Unit 66, in Pit M on the east side of the excavation area, just east of Building III (Karageorghis and Demas 1988: pl. 25: 4, 6). Although Pit M is described as a rubbish pit (Demas 1988: 39–40), its shape, size (ca. 1.3 m in diameter), shallowness, and lining of fire-cracked rocks in an ashy matrix indicates it was a hearth (Miksicek [1988: 467] suggests that it was a roasting pit; cf. Gur-Arieh et al. 2014). Its outdoor location is similar to that of many of the hearths at Tell es-Safi/Gath.

(ii) Pavement

In continuing our excavations to the north and west of the hearth (L111222), we uncovered an impressive pavement composed of four slabs of soft white stone, adorned with broad chisel marks, about 20 cm north of the hearth (fig. 6). They range in size from 18 x 30 cm to 36 x 51 cm. This is an unusual feature, as worked masonry in Philistia is rare before Iron Age II (e.g. Oren 1992). Their nearly pristine level of preservation provides a unique opportunity to study masonry technique. A preliminary comparison to tool marks recorded on Cyprus indicates that the chisel used on the Tell es-Safi/Gath pavement was considerably wider.[1]

(iii) Sherd Surface

Between the hearth and the pavement, we uncovered an installation consisting of an ovoid surface composed of approximately 100 sherds (1 m north/south x 1.10 m east/west) (L122035) (fig. 6). It extended from the northwest end of the hearth and lipped over the southern border of the stone pavement. Although no ash was associated with this surface, the sherds were cracked

and burned on their underside, and numerous blackened, friable sherd slivers were recovered during sifting. This installation may have served as some kind of heating element. The sherds may be related to those which covered the cluster of grape seeds found on top of the hearth. The sequence of deposition for these features is as follows. The hearth and the pavement with chisel marks were the first features to be constructed, followed by the installation of the sherd surface, which was subsequently cut on its northeast end by a shallow pit (the "goat pit" – see below), just 36 cm in diameter.

(iv) Goat Pit

In a sandy-ashy matrix within the shallow pit that cut the sherd surface (L122041), the remains of an immature male domestic goat (*Capra hircus*), aged ca. 18–24 months, were found (fig. 8). Some 120 bones and teeth of one animal, mostly fragmented, were recovered during the pit's excavation. Skeletal elements deriving from all body parts were represented – skull and jaw, fore and hind limbs, trunk elements and feet. A tally of the skeletal elements indicates that the animal was almost complete when placed in the pit. However, the bones of different body parts were dispersed throughout the pit and were not in articulation (fig. 8). Indeed, several of the long bones appear to have been placed inside the pit vertically such that they define its edge. As such, it seems likely that the remains were deposited in the pit as individual bones rather than as an articulated carcass or as joints of meat. The presence of unfused epiphyses adjacent to the long bones to which they belong indicates that the bones were covered by ligaments, periosteum, or even meat, when placed in the pit. This also attests to minimal post-depositional disturbance within the pit.

Butchery marks were observed on five bones. Most butchery damage was found on trunk elements and was indicative of carcass dismemberment: the axis, atlas and a cervical vertebra had been severed in half (vertical to the long axis of the bone), while a lumbar vertebra had been severed along the distal base (horizontal to the long axis of the bone). A left proximal radius exhibited cut marks on the anterior aspect of the shaft just below the epiphysis possibly associated with meat removal (filleting). Burning, in the form of scorching, was visible on a distal right radius and half an atlas vertebra. It was not possible to determine whether this was the result of food preparation, or accidental burning perhaps related to the burning on the overlying sherd surface.

Most of the goat long bones have straight (horizontal) fractures on their ends, indicative of post-depositional breakage probably due to trampling or compaction from the overburden of sediment. This suggests that they were whole or almost complete when interred in the pit. It is suggested that the pit served as a refuse locality for food remains from a single consumption event. This is supported by the presence of a range of skeletal elements all from one animal and occurrence of butchery damage.

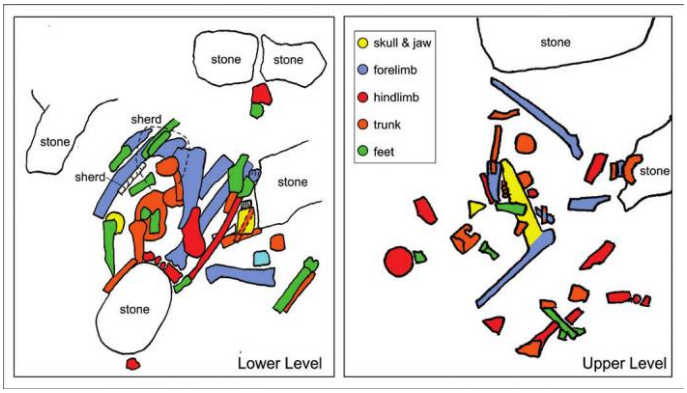
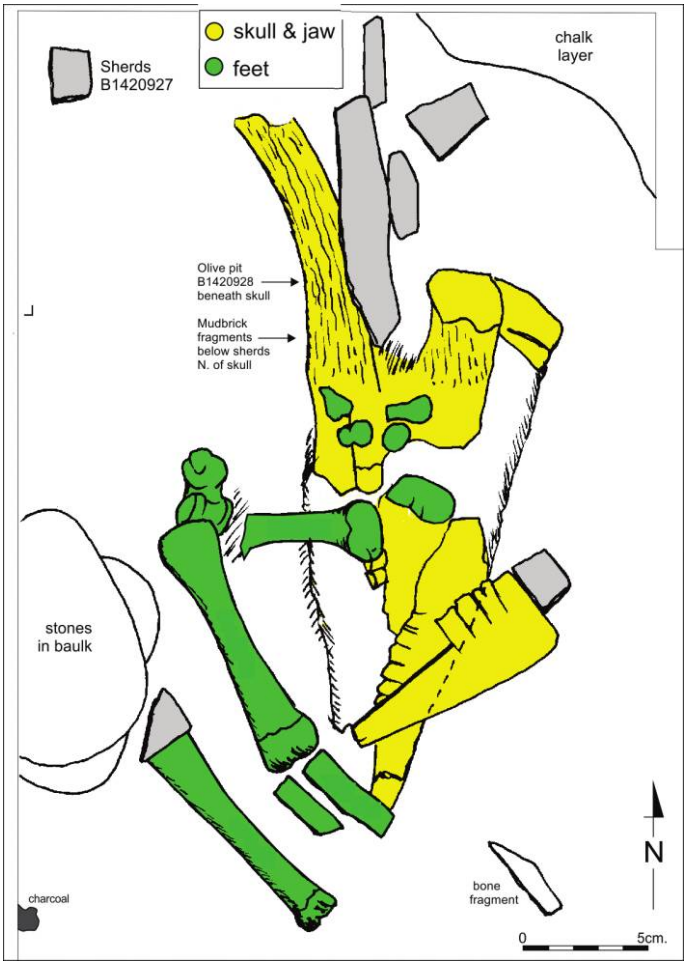


Figure 8 (above). Plan of goat bones within Pit 122041.
8a Lower Level, 8b Upper Level.
Arrangement by Jay Rosenberg, Amanda Rose Boucher, and Liora Kolska Horwitz.
Figure 9 (below). Plan of Goat Pit 2 (142811).
Arrangement by Jay Rosenberg, Sharon Staub, and Liora Kolska Horwitz.



(v) Northwest and Central Special Deposits

FAUNA. About 10 m to the northwest of the "goat pit," another shallow pit (L142811) was excavated containing the remains of a second immature male goat, aged ca. 18–24 months (fig. 9). The pit and its contents are dated to Iron Age I/II on the basis of a red burnished ware rim sherd found on top of the goat's skull. However, in this pit, the only remains found of the goat were the skull, jaw, and bones of the lower left and right fore and hind limb (astragali, calcanea, and metapodials). None of the meat-rich upper limb bones were present (i.e., humerus, radius, ulna, femur, tibia), nor any of the trunk elements (ribs or vertebrae). The anterior aspect of the left distal astragalus bore cut marks that are indicative of carcass dismemberment.

Figure 10 (above). View of pit (111209). Photograph by Louise A. Hitchcock.
Figure 11 (below). General view of superimposed hearths (101210) in Area A1. Photograph by Richard Wiskin.

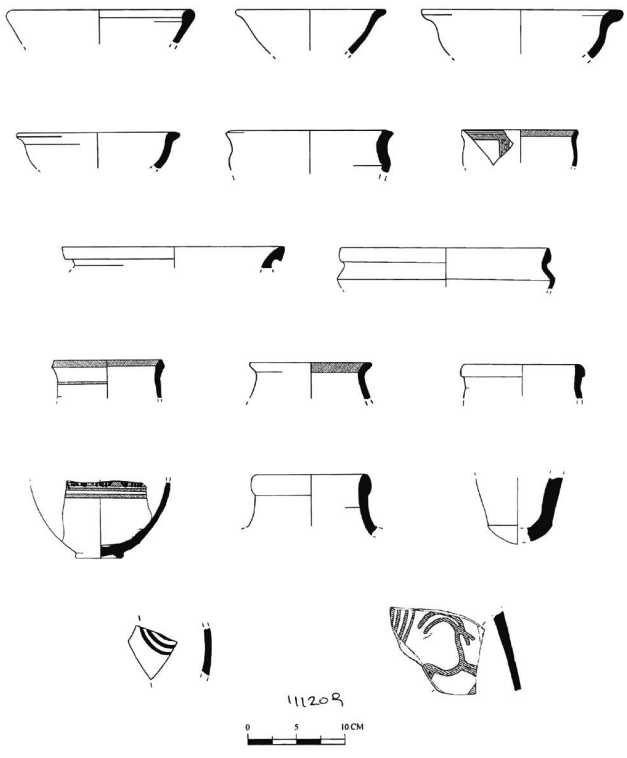
Animal and archaeological remains from a dump or refuse disposal area, located across several squares extending from the south to the center of the excavated area, were examined for comparison. The remains derive from three main loci. The identified faunal remains consisted of 85 diagnostic bones in addition to numerous unidentified bone fragments. Species represented in these loci are listed in Table 1. Remains of domestic caprines and cattle are the most common, with relatively few remains of pig or other species. It is apparent that the locus with the largest numbers of bones, L111209, is also that which has the broadest spectrum of species. These results indicate the importance of sample size in shaping the composition of taxa in an assemblage as a larger sample increases the chances of finding less attested species and gives us more confidence in our interpretations (fig. 10). This locus was located in the center of the area under discussion and spread across four different squares, measuring 0.85 m east–west by 1.93 m north–south. In terms of relative frequencies, the dump deposit with its broad spectrum of species closely resembles fauna recovered from Iron Age I workshops and domestic contexts in other parts of the site (Lev-Tov 2012) and clearly differs from the goat pits which contain the remains of only one species.

Burnt faunal remains were found only in Locus 111209 of the refuse pit, and range from scorched (black) to calcined (white). These remains include several bones of cattle, sheep/goat, fish, and dog. The wide range of colors and species affected suggests that the burning was not associated with food preparation but accidental, perhaps due to the proximity to a hearth. Several butchered cattle bones, but no caprine remains, were found in the refuse deposits at Tell es-Safi/Gath, exhibiting damage resulting from the use of a heavy implement such as a cleaver, which has severed large portions of the bones leaving a well-defined edge. The single dog bone shows no evidence of having been consumed but two instances of gnawing by rodents were identified, indicating that the bones were exposed for a time facilitating access by scavengers. A wide range of skeletal elements is represented in the rubbish deposits including fragments of bones belonging to the skull, trunk, and limbs, indicating exploitation of complete animals or joints. The majority of cattle, sheep/goat, and pig remains represent immature animals. Trade with the Mediterranean coast is indicated by the presence of a marine fish – probably a ray (*Elasmobranchii*, identified by O. Lernau), and a marine shell, which was water-worn indicating that it was collected as a wash-up. Such trade items may have lent status to the consumption episode of a feast (e.g. Isaakidou 2007: 15–16).

MATERIAL CULTURE. Although hardly any Early and Late Bronze Age pottery was associated with the refuse deposit, the latest diagnostic sherds, representing the majority of the ceramic assemblage, date the deposit to late Iron Age I (fig. 12). A number of objects found mixed in with the faunal material in the dump, L111209, contribute to its symbolic character, suggestive of feasting activity (fig. 13). Found in the deposit was a substantial part of an iron blade which may be an indicator of trade, since the iron ore was most likely imported to the site (iron production took place at another part of Area A, ca. 20 m to the west – see Eliyahu-Behar et al. 2012). The rarity of iron artifacts at Tell es-Safi/Gath and the presence of an iron blade in this deposit may also indicate the high status of the materials placed into the deposit, the feasting activity that resulted in the deposit, and that of the individuals who created the deposit. An almost complete basalt mortar was found upside down, embedded in the surface of the deposit. It was intact, except for a small area chipped from the rim. One might speculate, on the basis of its small size, that it could have been used for grinding condiments for meat. Furthermore, it is suggested that the small, fragmentary Late Bronze Age mould for making plaques of the "Qudshu-type" (see below) found in the deposit could possibly represent an heirloom, thus enhancing the symbolic character of this deposit.

(vi) Southern Special Deposits (Fig. 2)

To the south end of Area A, several additional refuse deposits, dated on the basis of ceramics to late Iron Age I, were excavated. The first deposit was a refuse pit (L132004) measuring 1.2 m in diameter and about 30 cm deep (fig. 14). The pit cut through an earlier cobbled surface and ended with a lower layer of cobbles



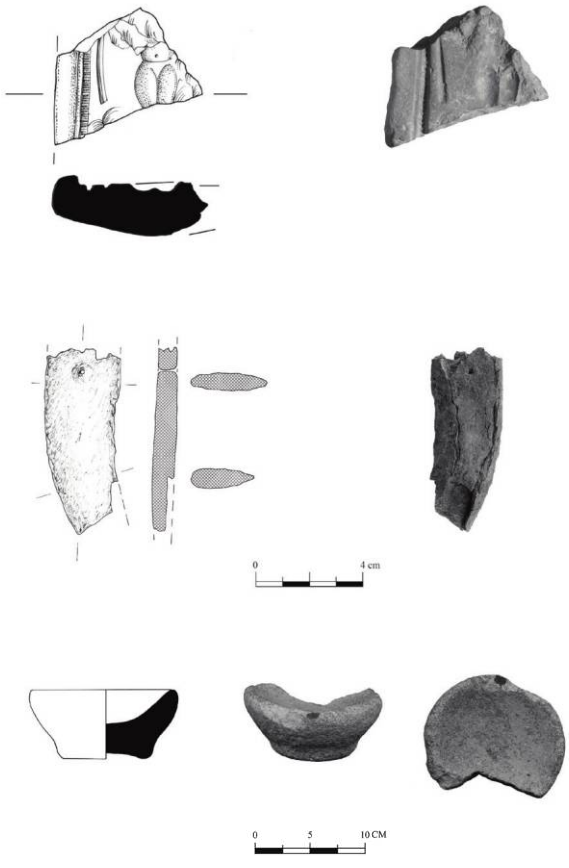


Figure 12 (left). Selection of pottery from pit (111209).
Figure 13 (right). Selection of finds from pit (111209): iron blade (1112154), basalt mortar (1112065), female figurine mold (1112118).
Images courtesy of Ackerman Family Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Gath.

that were placed at the bottom of the pit and formed the termination layer of the deposit, which is ca. 80 cm in diameter. The pit contained 22 Iron Age I sherds and a variety of animal bones (dominated by caprines, cattle, and pigs). Two roughly rectangular rubbish deposits (L132012 and L132018) were found just to the north of this pit, separated by linear accumulations of stones extending east–west. Combined, both deposits measure approximately 2.5 x 3 m. These refuse areas contained a similar range of animal bones as L132004 as well as a donkey scapula, and a total of 200 Iron Age I sherds – of which 19 were Mycenaean IIIC or Philistine I, including some derived from drinking vessels (figs. 15–16). The surface of the southernmost deposit (L132018) was undulating with a dense concentration of stones. At the bottom of the northernmost rubbish deposit (L132012), a fragmentary animal figurine was found (fig. 17a). It appears to be the neck, front legs, and torso of a stocky animal, perhaps a bovine, with four incised ridges on what appears to be the underside of its neck. The figurine exhibited burn marks where the torso was broken. A ceramic bovine head (fig. 17b), perhaps a protome from a vase, was found in the fill residue from one of the pits, as were several water-worn mollusk shells and a worked astragalus (smoothed on the medial and lateral faces) from a fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*) — the first from the early Iron Age levels at the site. Similarly modified astragali found in Levantine Iron Age contexts have been associated with a variety of activities including divination and gaming, or used as tokens for exchange or counting (e.g. Sasson 2007 and references therein; Cecchini 2014).

DISCUSSION: FEASTING IN THE AEGEAN AND POSSIBLE PARALLELS WITH TELL ES-SAFI/GATH

Faunal Evidence

There is extensive archaeozoological evidence for large-scale Mycenaean feasting events, including Linear B tablets that provide evidence for sacrifices of sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle, associated with communal, ritual banquets (e.g., Whittaker von Hofsten 2004; Palaima 2004, 2008; Wright 2004; Halstead and Barrett 2004; Hitchcock et al. 2008). In most instances, faunal remains were comingled with ceramics and other items of material culture. At the sanctuary of Agios Konstantinos at Methana, Hamilakis and Konsolaki (2004) demonstrate that the main sacrificial animals were immature pigs, which together with sheep and goat were consumed in the feasting ceremonies. This echoes the emphasis on immature animals as found in the pit deposits at Tell es-Safi/Gath. In another example, a Late Helladic III refuse dump containing pottery dating to early Late Helladic IIIA2, at the site of Tsoungiza (Greece), has been interpreted as representing feasting refuse (Dabney et al. 2004). Of the 100 faunal remains (indicating the "minimum number of anatomical units" [MinAU] and not the number of bones), over half are remains of cattle (54 MinAU) while the remainder are pigs (16 MinAU) and sheep/goat (30 MinAU). The cattle remains were represented by a disproportionate quantity of head and foot remains relative to other skeletal elements, similar to the goat remains in the second pit at Tell es-Safi/Gath.

The notable absence of game animals in the Tell es-Safi/Gath feasting deposits discussed here may be connected to their overall scarcity in Philistine faunal assemblages (e.g., Horwitz 2009; Maher 2010; Lev-Tov 2000; 2012). It may also reflect a different set of Philistine practices relating to game consumption, as opposed to that of domestic animals. For example, meat from game may have been distributed, prepared, and eaten in a special manner, with only those who had participated in the hunt partaking (Hamilakis 2003).

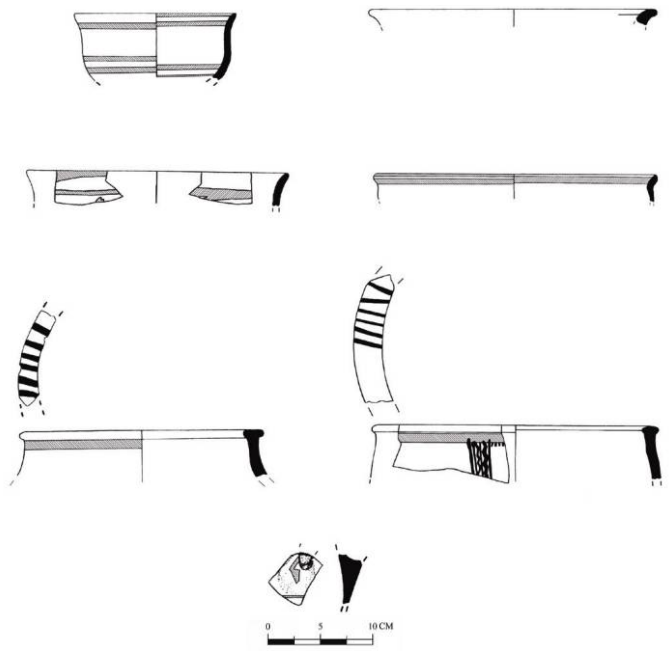
In Mycenaean culture there is some evidence for the preservation of feasting residues, as in the so-called "Archives Room" at LH IIIB (thirteenth century B.C.E.) Pylos, where burnt cattle bones were curated (Stocker and Davis 2004). At Tell es-Safi/Gath, although few burnt remains were recovered from the deposits discussed in this article, the fact that the faunal remains were carefully disposed in pits situated within a constrained area close to the hearth-activity area, as well as near numerous outdoor superimposed hearths, may represent a parallel undertaking.

With regard to the separate burial of the head and feet of the goat mentioned above, this corresponds to a widespread practice in the Aegean where such "head and feet" burials were distributed in tombs, pits, and even villas, a famous example being the "House of the Sacrificed Oxen" at Knossos from the Middle Bronze Age (Evans 1928: 302). Aside from the Tell es-Safi/Gath example, head and foot burials are, to the best of our knowledge, absent in other Iron Age faunal assemblages from the Levant. In some cases, such as in Minoan sites dating to the Late Bronze Age, the finding of horn cores in pithoi and in storage rooms points to their utilitarian rather than ritual use (e.g. Marinatos 1986: 40). However, Marinatos (1986: 40, with further references) has also noted the frequent depiction of animal heads or skulls on seals, and that these skeletal elements were commonly ritually deposited in Minoan palaces, palatial villas, and sacred caves. Dabney et al. (2004: 200–01) have suggested that, in Mycenaean (Late Bronze Age) sites on the Greek mainland, "head and feet" burials could simply represent primary butchery waste, but also could have been processed for the extraction of bone marrow.

In the Monumental Civic Building at the Archaic site of Azoria on Crete, remains of butchering debris and food consumption of pig, sheep, and goat were recovered (Haggis et al. 2011: 25–27). To the north of this building was the Archaic Hearth Shrine, characterized by an altar built against a hearth roughly in the center of the room. Among the animal bones associated with the altar, the excavators note that "sheep, goat, pig, and cattle are represented by both cranial and postcranial elements, including meaty upper-limb bone fragments and lower-leg and foot bones" (Haggis et al. 2011: 32). They suggest it was possible that crania and tusks were displayed on top of the altar, citing parallels with LM IIIC Kavousi-Vronda where cattle skulls were trimmed to possibly form ritual plaques and agrimi horns were intentionally deposited (Day and Snyder 2004: 71). Room B4 at Kavousi-Vronda was a small, basement storage room in the "Chieftain's House" (House A-B). Here, fauna and pottery (including drinking and eating vessels) seem to have been deliberately deposited concurrently with its intentional filling with roofing clay from the house in early LM IIIC. The animal skulls were arranged separately in a circle in the southern section of the room (Day 2009: 39–43). The excavator compares this assemblage with the ritual pits at Thronos/Kephala (see below). However, the lower leg and foot bones from sheep and accompanying food debris in the north part of the room were regarded as butchering discard (Day and Snyder 2004: 69). It is possible that the deposition was connected with a termination or renewal ritual, a distinct possibility for Deposit 111209 at Tell es-Safi/Gath, discussed above. Overall, the context of their deposition is interesting and relevant to the Tell es-Safi/Gath rubbish deposits, as it shows the range of treatments given to animal bones, many clearly associated with feasting and/or symbolic activities.

Figure 14. View of Southern Pit 132004, Photograph by Richard Wiskin.

Although differing in time and place, later Greek texts might shed light on worldviews that modern readers might regard as an unusual practice. A sacrificial calendar and a stele dating to the mid-fourth century B.C.E. from the island of Kos list how specific parts of an animal were divided among a number of different persons, with the horns, muzzle, and hooves given to the *Phyleomachidai*, those who provided the barley groats and wine for the bloodless sacrifice (Ekroth 2013: 118). This is not to say that the Philistines had identical cult functionaries, but it might be conceivable that animals were apportioned to different persons according



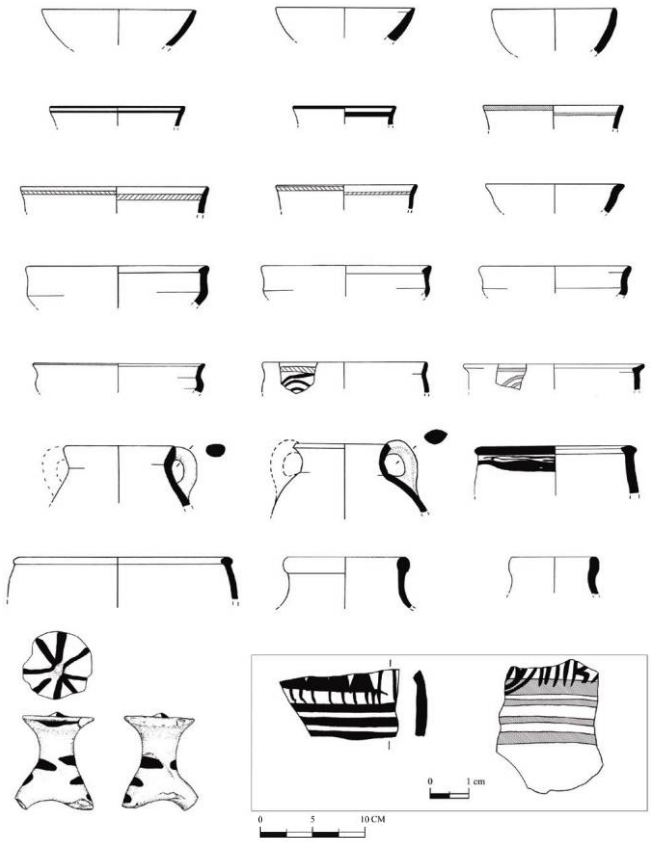


Figure 15 (left). Selection of Pottery from Pit 132012.
Figure 16 (right). Section of pottery from Pit 132018. Images courtesy of Ackerman Family Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Gath.

to rank and status. Indeed, the fragmentary aspect of Mycenaean bone deposits, perhaps like those recovered at Tell es-Safi/Gath, has been explained by Dabney et al. (2004: 201) as resulting from the practice of distributing meat to the participants to be taken home.

In a published discussion of a paper by Whittaker von Hofsten (2004) on Mycenaean ritual, Nanno Marinatos notes: "For the Greeks an altar is a hearth. It is not the place where you slaughter the animal. It is where you cook parts of the animal. It is doubtful whether you have this kind of altar in the Mycenaean world. You have hearths." This is not entirely the case, as Webb (1999) has made a good argument for the use of display altars at sites on Cyprus – the horned altars at Kition and Myrtou-*Pighades* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries B.C.E., while benches were used for the display of offerings and cult statues in LM IIIC Crete, a period that corresponds to the early Philistine era. However, the custom of depositing special parts of animals in ritual contexts continues unbroken into the Geometric Era of the eighth century B.C.E. at the Cretan temple of Dreros (Marinatos 1986: 40), a rectangular temple with interior hearth and a small platform for the display of cult images. The building at Dreros is interesting because of obvious similarities to the cult area at Mycenae and to the Philistine temple at Tell Qasile. It is linked with the past through the recent discovery of the LM IIIC hearth temple at the nearby site of Kephala-Vasilikis (Prent 2007; Eliopoulos 1998; 2004). The hearth temple is an eight-roomed complex, which consists of a series of rectangular halls. Among these are a columned hall with a hearth, which connected at a right angle via a vestibule to another hall with a baetyl and an altar, and several additional rooms with hearths and benches. The benched rooms contained the full range of LM IIIC cult paraphernalia including snake tubes and a number of figures of the "goddess with upraised arms," with one of them built into her own throne.

Table Ware, Tokens, and Memory

The seemingly purposeful deposition of fragmentary but unique objects uncovered in the feasting locale at Tell es-Safi/Gath is striking: the small basalt mortar, the iron blade, a so-called "Qudshu-type" plaque mould (e.g. Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 66–68), an animal figurine with burn marks, and a fragment of a ceramic bovine head. Taken cumulatively, the amount is impressive (e.g., Dabney et al. 2004: 211–12; D'Agata 1997–2000: 55). In this context, information on rubbish and ritual from the Aegean is illuminating. We suggest that the small size of the mortar may denote its use for grinding condiments to flavor the meat consumed, thereby heightening the experience. The grape seeds found in the hearth may also have been connected with the production of a condiment. Hruby (2008) made a similar suggestion for cooking pots of a small size found in Bronze Age Crete, and Hamilakis (2008) has suggested that condiments enhanced feasting. The use of spices in the Late Bronze Age Aegean has been confirmed through residue analysis (Brogan and Koh 2008) and by Linear B texts (Isaakidou 2007: 8–9), while in Israel, cinnamon and possibly also nutmeg from Southeast Asia have been found in Phoenician Tel Dor (Namdar et al. 2013).[2] Spices could restore flavors lost through salting or drying, and enhance the status of those providing the meat. The smells emanating from roasting meat and the use of spices could have served to heighten anticipation of a feast (Fox 2008).

The feasts took place at Tell es-Safi/Gath around outdoor hearths. Locating many of the hearths in external courtyards at this site would have created a context for social display as such a location promotes larger and more visible communal gatherings. Such gatherings could have occurred within the context of feasting that included

serving and drinking vessels such as kraters and bell-shaped or deep bowls, which when broken, were deposited in rubbish dumps after use. Hearths were frequently constructed in superimposed layers. As there was no evidence of flaws in the hearths that were renewed, the act of renewal might have represented symbolic acts by members of the community as a means of promoting their status through competitive feasting and patronage to the community.

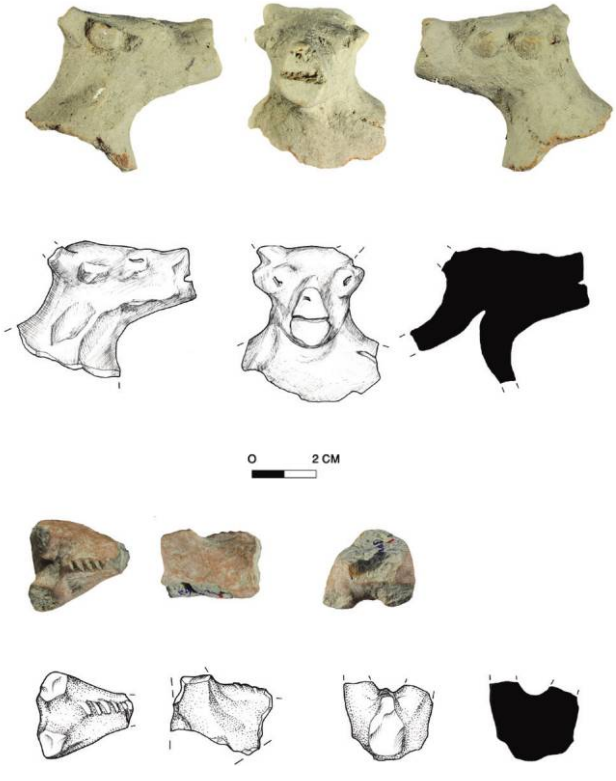
While pictorial scenes are rare in Philistia, Aegean-style spirals are common on drinking ware from Area A, and Hitchcock (2013) and Hitchcock and Maeir (2014) have argued that these motifs may have contributed to a heightened sense of nostalgia in social drinking and feasting activity, and possibly served as symbols of identity around which early Iron Age cultures coalesced. Vessels and decorated kraters as well as smaller objects for display would have been visible during such activities (Stockhammer 2009; Fox 2012: 34). Unbroken vessels may have been returned to the household for reuse in the next feasting event (Dabney et al. 2004: 202).

At its conclusion, the remains of the feast (food residues, vessels used for serving/consumption/drinking) were deposited in nearby pits or dumps. A fragmentary, but still symbolic object, such as a figurine fragment, parts of a pouring or drinking vessel, or a tool used in the feasting event would also be deposited, while participants may have kept fragments of these items as a token or memento of the event. People still do such things today when they keep a printed napkin, matchbook, or swizzle stick to remind them of a significant occasion and evoke feelings of nostalgia. The practice of symbolic deposition and memorialization is known as *enchainment*, the establishment of lasting bonds between people and objects by depositing part of an object and retaining another part. *Enchainment* is a feature that characterizes pits in LM IIIC Crete (Driessen et al. 2008, esp. 7–8) and Hitchcock (2011) has argued that a similar act of curation and deposition was performed with fragments of Philistine animal head cups, a practice known on Cyprus and in the Aegean. Such acts of structured deposition become more meaningful when we consider their greater context, just 15–20 meters east of the ritual area of Tell es-Safi/Gath (Maeir 2006; fig. 18).

Such displays and performances of sociality heightened by alcohol consumption would have fostered nostalgia, strengthened community bonds, and/or promoted the status of particular individuals as has been argued for Mycenaean feasts (e.g., Hamilakis 1996; Bendall 2004; Hitchcock et al. 2008).

Feasting at Tell es-Safi/Gath in Its Broader Context

In conclusion, a series of important features from the Iron Age I levels at Tell es-Safi/Gath, Area A indicate that it was a feasting locale for the episodic consumption of ritual meals by the Philistines, fitting the criteria noted above in the opening section. These include the pebbled hearth and its associated features, pits with single animals, as well as refuse deposits containing decorated pottery and animal bones intermingled with symbolic tokens of memory dating from Iron Age I (and even earlier). The lack of soil matrices within this debris suggests the deposits built up quickly (e.g. Dabney et al. 2004: 204–05). All of the rubbish deposits in Area A follow a pattern of including faunal refuse, decorated pottery for pouring and drinking, and tokens of symbolic items contributing to their status as "Special Deposits" (e.g. Hill 1996). Similar practices are documented at the site of Kavousi-Vronda in eastern Crete and at Thronos/Kephala in western Crete in the Amarai Valley in LM IIIC, where over fifty pits associated with the settlement contained a mixture of drinking ware and animal bones as well as a single animal figurine (D'Agata 1997–2000, 2000). While studies of feasting and consumption practices of the Late Bronze Age Aegean can shed light on the practices of the Iron Age, Philistine feasting represents a different level of activity whereby new realities distinct from the palatial economies



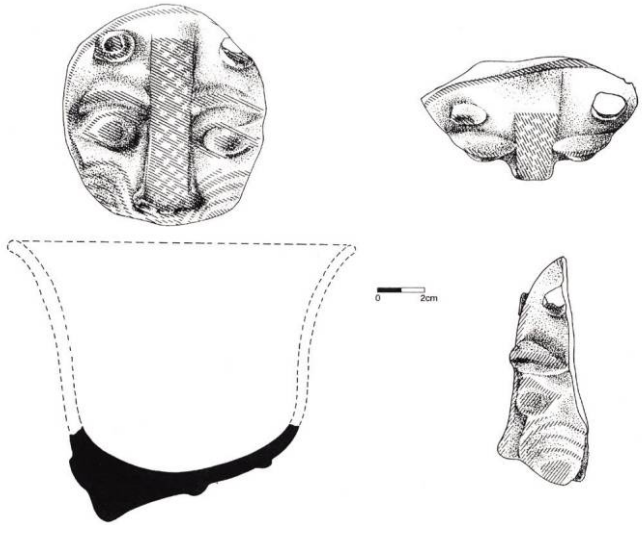


Figure 17 (left). Animal Figurine 17b (Basket 1320463), Bovine Figurine 17a (A15AW013).
Figure 18 (right). Base of late Iron I Philistine Head Cup (330243) from Tell es-Safi/Gath, Area A.
Images courtesy of Ackerman Family Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Gath.

of the Late Bronze Age came into play, namely, the maintenance and promotion of cultural identity that coalesced around meaningful symbols of the past, and public displays of sociality.

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Notes

1. A microscopic study of the chisel marks is being conducted in collaboration with Haskel and Tina Greenfield of the University of Manitoba.
2. Gadot et al. (2014) have noted use of aroma-producing incense in Iron Age I chalices from Tell es-Safi/Gath.

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Table 1. Species Representation in Refuse Disposal Area Compared with Other Areas on the Tel

	Area A2					Other Areas on Tel		
	L111209	L111214	L111228	Total A2		LBII*	Iron I*	Iron IIA*
Species	N Bones	N Bones	N Bones	N Bones	% Bones	% Bones	% Bones	% Bones
Domestic Sheep/Goat *Ovis aries/Capra hircus*	34	4	9	47	40.1	79	42	51
Domestic Sheep *Ovis aries*	-	-	2	2	1.7	4	3	3
Domestic goat *Capra hircus*	-	-	-	-	-	2	12	2
Domestic cattle *Bos taurus*	36	11	4	51	43.5	14	27	28
Domestic pig *Sus scrofa*	5	1	1	7	5.9	-	13	13
Fallow deer *Dama mesopotamica*	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	<1
Horse/Donkey *Equus sp.*	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	<1
Canid cf. Dog *Cf. Canis familiaris*	1	-	-	1	0.8	1	1	-
Felid sp. *Felidae sp.*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<1
Undet. Bird, *Aves spp.*	1	-	-	1	0.8	-	<1	-
Spur-thighed tortoise *Testudo graeca*	2	-	-	2	1.7	-	-	-
Fish spp., *Pisces spp.*	-	-	-	-	-	<1	<1	1
Ray or shark *Elasmobranchii sp.*	5	-	-	5	4.2	-	-	-
Marine Shell *Glycymeris insubrica*	1	-	-	1	0.8	-	-	-
Total N Bones	**85**	**16**	**16**	**117**		**191**	**327**	**804**

* Data from Lev-Tov 2012.

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