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More Lead Coffins from Israel*

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Jerusalem

SINCE the publication of our last paper on locally discovered lead coffins,¹ further examples have come to light, either in excavations or due to the rearrangement of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums reserves.² It thus seemed appropriate to publish those coffins of the State collections³ which show motifs hitherto unrecorded, either locally or elsewhere. This paper concludes with a discussion of the places and dates of manufacture of the items published here.

* Abbreviations of studies frequently quoted here are: Avigad—N. Avigad: *Beth She'arim*, III, Jerusalem, 1976; Avi-Yonah—M. Avi-Yonah: Lead Coffins from Palestine, *QDAP* 4 (1935), pp. 87–99, 138–153; Avi-Yonah—*JHS* — M. Avi-Yonah: Three Lead Coffins from Palestine, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 50 (1930), pp. 300–312; Bertin — Anne-Marie Bertin: Les sarcophages en plomb Syriens au Musée du Louvre, *Revue Archéologique* 1 (1974), pp. 43–82; Chéhab—*Syr.* 15 — M. Chéhab: Sarcophages en plomb du Musée National Libanais, *Syria* 15 (1934), pp. 337–350; Chéhab—*Syr.* 16 — idem, *Syria* 16 (1935), pp. 51–72; Hajjar—J. Hajjar: Un hypogée romain à Deba'al dans la région de Tyr, *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 18 (1965), pp. 63–104; Koch-Sichteremann—G. Koch and H. Sichteremann: *Römische Sarkophage*, München, 1982; Mercklin—*AA* — E. von Mercklin: Antike Bleisarkophage. Ueberblick und Vorschlag einer neuen Untersuchungsmethode, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 51 (1936), cols. 252–281; Mercklin—*Ber.* 3 — idem, Untersuchungen zu den antiken Bleisarkophagen, *Berytus* 3 (1936), pp. 51–75; Mercklin—*Ber.* 6 — idem, *Berytus* 6 (1939/40), pp. 27–71; Müfid—A. Müfid: Die Bleisarkophage im Antikemuseum zu Istanbul, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 47 (1932), cols. 389–446; Rahmani—*IEJ* 10 — L. Y. Rahmani: Roman Tombs in Shmuel ha-Navi Street, Jerusalem, *IEJ* 10 (1960), pp. 140–148; Rahmani—*IEJ* 24 — idem, A Lead Coffin from the Hefer Valley, *IEJ* 24 (1974), pp. 124–127; Rahmani—*At.* — idem, Roman Tombs in Naḥal Raqafot, Jerusalem, *'Atiqot* (English Series) 11 (1976), pp. 77–88; Rahmani—*IEJ* 27 — L. Y. Rahmani and J. Gath: A Roman Tomb at Manaḥat, Jerusalem, *IEJ* 27 (1977), pp. 209–214; Rahmani—*IEJ* 36 — L. Y. Rahmani: On Some Recently Discovered Lead Coffins from Israel, *IEJ* 36 (1986), pp. 234–250.

¹ Rahmani—*IEJ* 36.

² Thanks are due to A. Eitan, director of the Department, for his permission to publish these items here. For the drawings in Figs. 1–2, thanks are due to Dr. Josephinna Iaroshevich; for Fig. 3 — to Leora Manewich. The numbers following the designation of the items are the Department's registration numbers.

³ At present these include 38 complete coffins and about 12 fragmentary ones. Of these, 13 carry the typically Jerusalemite motif of *erotes*, and six others without this motif also come from Jerusalem tombs. Six (one of which is now in Milan; see below, n. 91) come from Byzantine Jerusalem; one fragment probably from Byzantine Gaza; two, still unpublished, from Byzantine Beersheba (see below, n. 108). Two complete coffins and one fragment should be assigned to a Caesarean workshop, and four complete examples and one fragment to one in Ashkelon. One coffin and one fragment may have originated at Beth Guvrin (Eleutheropolis). Of those discovered in the north, five are from Tyre (or perhaps Acre) and three are from Sidon, including one Jewish example. One coffin and one fragment are probably the work of itinerant artisans. In other public collections, there is one Jerusalem type coffin in the Hebron Municipal

THE COFFINS

1. *The Netanya Coffin*, IDAM 53.3 (Pl. 10:A–D)

This fragment⁴ was recovered in 1949, in the course of the development of Netanya at the western part of Umm Khalid (map ref. 138 193), a site containing Late Roman–Byzantine (third to fifth centuries C.E.) as well as Crusader remains.⁵

The fragment consists of about half of a coffin's long side. The extant portion is 0.94 m. long, and in some places its original height of 0.35 m. has remained intact. The wide border frieze above and below is formed by the repetition of a panel, 170 mm. long and 55 mm. high, which consists of two consecutive bunches of three laurel leaves of equal length with berries; the veins of each leaf are very faintly shown.



Fig. 1: The Netanya Coffin: Panel A.

Museum; five more are in the Israel Museum's stores, where there are also fragments of one coffin from Ashkelon. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem, has a Caesarean coffin in its museum (see below, n. 100); the Flagellation Museum, Jerusalem, has a Christian one, from Gaza (see below, n. 83). The Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has one of the Jewish Sidonian coffins from Beth She'arim; the museum there has two similar ones and fragments of a Tyrian one on display, all from that necropolis. (For a table summarizing these coffins by workshops and collections, see Table 1, p. 144.)

⁴ The author's thanks are due to his colleague, Varda Sussman, keeper of the IDAM stores, for drawing his attention to this fragment.

⁵ Department records: Y. Ory on 21.2.49; F. Berger on 8.5.51. For finds of the Roman period at this and adjacent sites, see C.R. Condor and H.H. Kitchener: *The Survey of Western Palestine, Memoirs 2*, London, 1882, pp. 142–143 and R. Reich: *Archaeological Sites within the Town of Netanya, The Book of Netanya*, Tel-Aviv/Netanya, 1983, pp. 105–109 (Hebrew); for short notices, see *QDAP* 8 (1939), p. 175; 10 (1944), p. 207; *Notes and News, IEJ* 37 (1987), pp. 57–59.

The scheme of decoration on the empty background between these borders follows the pattern A-B-C-D-C-A-[E].

Panel A (Fig. 1, Pl. 10:B) is an unframed arched rectangle, slightly raised, 70 mm. wide and 160 mm. high. It contains the frontal image of a bare-breasted woman, facing the front and clad in a long skirt whose heavy pleats slope down towards her thighs and legs. The skirt has a central fold, the top of which shows a heavy knot, while its lower end forms an awkward loop. The tips of the woman's feet protrude from below the skirt's hem: her left foot is shown frontally, while her right foot is at an angle. The feet seem to be shod. Little of the woman's facial features survive; her hair, covering part of her forehead, is gathered on top of her head into a heavy knot to the right. Her figure is slim, widening at the shoulders and hips; her breasts are small. Her arms are poised akimbo; her hands hold a vertically-ribbed large shell or bowl, with the thumbs spread above and the fingers supporting the sides. From behind the woman's arms emerge the heads of two snakes, their bodies wriggling down along her hips and legs. The snake to the woman's right is slightly thicker than that to her left, and has a beard and a crest which are lacking in the other. The heads of the snakes face one another, and are slightly inclined towards the vessel's rim.

Panel B (Fig. 2, Pl. 10:C), about 160 mm. long, 45 mm. high, shows two opposed quadrupeds, with rather indistinct features. They are jumping towards one another; that on the right probably represents a ram with its head turned to the front. The other animal is difficult to identify; only part of one of its forelegs is shown.

Panel C (Pl. 10:D, left), 60 mm. long, 40 mm. high, shows a dolphin, leaping to the right.

Panel D (Pl. 10:D, right), 50 mm. wide, 130 mm. high, contains the representation of a naked youthful satyr facing right, with his right leg drawn back. His right arm is raised in adoration, palm outwards; his lowered left hand carries a shepherd's crook (*pedum*), its upper end sticking out behind his shoulder. Parts of the image are indistinct.

Panel E can only be guessed at, as most of it is missing. The small surviving part suffices to show that it does not repeat any of the other motifs on this fragment.

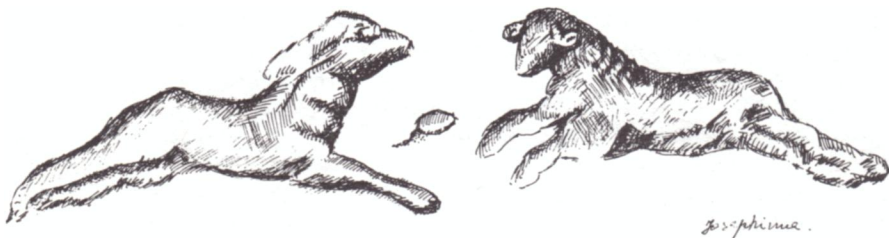


Fig. 2: The Netanya Coffin: Panel B.

The laurel bunch of the border friezes is that designated by Avi-Yonah as 'Type 6', and ascribed by him to third century Tyre.⁶

Panel A had so far only been recorded once, as part of a very different composition on a lead coffin whose Sidonian origin seems certain.⁷ In both cases, the same stamp seems to have been applied. Mercklin, who only saw a general photograph of the Sidonian coffin, suggested the possibility that the wavy lines at the woman's sides might be snakes, which she was seizing by the head; he compared this representation to that of a goddess holding a snake on a lead coffin from Tyre, owned by the Biblical Institute at Rome.⁸ It has been suggested that this depicted Persephone-Qadesh, holding a snake instead of her sceptre.⁹

Closer study of Panel A leads us to reject this identification in this case: the woman here is bare-breasted, while Kore-Persephone always appears fully clad, and even veiled and crowned.¹⁰ When snakes are associated with this deity, they usually are shown rising from the *cista mystica*, from whence they ascend her sceptre.¹¹ In certain cases the image of *cista mystica* and snakes may appear alone, detached from that of the goddess.¹² All these images seem to be based on very ancient ones which show a woman, usually fully clad, accompanied by or carrying in her hands one or two snakes; these — at any rate in their Greek and Roman context — have correctly been understood as representing guardians of the home.¹³ In the ancient Near East we find

⁶ Avi-Yonah, p. 146, Fig. 3.6; cf. also Hajjar, Fig. 3, Type 13.

⁷ Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, pp. 34–36, No. B 2, Pl. 6:1. Thanks are due to W.H. Cole, keeper of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum, London, for allowing me to inspect this coffin, registered there as No. 1921. 12–13. 1, 2.

⁸ Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, p. 36, n. 1.

⁹ Thus R. Mouterde: *Divinités et symboles sur les sarcophages de plomb, Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph, Beyrouth* 21 (1937), pp. 208–209, Pl. 52:6, citing P. Ronzevalle. This identification was accepted by Mercklin—*Ber.* 5, p. 40, Pls. 11:4; 12:1, 2. For identifications of Kore-Persephone with Qadesh see also H. Seyrig: *Notes sur le culte de Déméter en Palestine, Antiquités Syriennes*, I, Paris, 1934, pp. 56–61 (= *Syria* 13 [1932], pp. 355–360).

¹⁰ E.g. the late second–early third centuries statue from Samaria, J.W. Crowfoot *et al.*: *Samaria–Sebaste III: The Objects from Samaria*, London, 1957, p. 73, Pls. 8–9.

¹¹ Thus on Neapolis-Sichem coins of the mid-third century C.E.; Y. Meshorer: *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Collection of the American Numismatic Society, Part 6: Palestine — South Arabia*, New York, 1981, Nos. 1037, 1038, Pl. 34 (on plate mistakenly numbered 1038, 1039).

¹² See also Y. Meshorer: *The 'Cista Mystica' and the Worship of Kore-Persephone at Samaria, EI 15* (1981), pp. 356–357, Pl. 70:3, 4 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 87*). For similar images from abroad, cf. J. Overbeck: *Griechische Kunstmythologie*, III, Leipzig, 1873–78, p. 514, Nos. 10, 12, 17, 21. For late fourth century C.E. representations from Athens cf. R. Duthey: *The Taurobolium, its Evolution and Terminology*, Leiden, 1969, pp. 9–13, Nos. 5–6; for their illustrations see M.P. Nilsson: *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*² 2, München, 1950, Pl. 12:2, centre; 12:1, left. Cf. also W.H. Roscher: *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, s.v. Kora und Demeter, cols. 1357–1360.

¹³ Thus Nilsson (above, n. 12), I, 1955, pp. 288–290. See also G.M.A. Hanfmann and Nancy H. Ramage: *Sculpture from Sardis: The Finds through 1975*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1978, pp. 43–45. For pairs of snakes on Roman armour, see Y. Garbsch: *Römische Paraderüstungen*, München, 1978, Pls. 6:2; 11:1; these are of apotropaic character — *ibid.*, p. 31.

such snakes held by a naked or almost naked goddess, generally thought to represent Qudshu-Ashera, Astarte or Anath. The snakes associated with the goddess are usually interpreted as representing cosmic forces — the sea¹⁴ or the sky;¹⁵ alternatively they have been understood as symbols of fecundity in general.¹⁶ In none of these cases — either in the West or in the East — do we find any representation of the woman, whether human or divine, offering food or drink to such snakes.

The feeding of snakes is, however, frequently represented on monuments and vessels of a funerary character, where the snakes are understood to represent chthonic deities or the deceased persons themselves. This latter interpretation has been maintained, even though recognizing the lack of logic in thus showing the deceased catering, so to speak, for himself.¹⁷ This Greek image of the deceased feeding the snake is still to be found upon Roman sarcophagus lids,¹⁸ while snakes, sometimes in pairs, are shown crawling up towards the central bowl of Roman tomb altars; the repetition may perhaps signify no more than a wish for symmetry.¹⁹ The latter representation finds at this period a parallel in the house-genii, worshipped together with the *penates* and the *lar familiaris*; such genii are represented as approaching a central altar from both its sides, though here one of them is often shown as male, sporting a beard and a crest, a feature actually known from much earlier Greek monuments.²⁰

The representation of the bare-breasted woman on our fragment suggests the image of the nymph²¹ — in fact that of the standing nymph holding a shell in front of

¹⁴ F.M. Cross: *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge, Mass., 1973, p. 34; J.W. Betlyon: The Cult of Ašerah/Elat at Sidon, *JNES* 44 (1985), pp. 53–56.

¹⁵ R. du Mesnil du Buisson: Note sur les serpents célestes, in: *Études sur les Dieux Phéniciens hérités par l'Empire Romain*, Paris, 1970, pp. 131–137.

¹⁶ W.F. Albright: *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Baltimore, 1946, pp. 75–76; see also R. Stadelmann: *Syrisch-Palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten*, Leiden, 1967, pp. 110–115.

¹⁷ For a detailed treatment, see E. Küster: Die Schlange in der griechischen Kunst und Religion, *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 13/2 (1913), pp. 62–85; Jane Harrison: *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*³ (1922), New York, 1955, pp. 325–331; Nilsson (above, n. 12), pp. 198–199 and sources quoted there. For an example showing two snakes, one for each deceased person, depicted on a first century B.C.E. grave relief from Pella, see A. Furtwängler: Ancient Sculptures at Chatsworth House, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901), pp. 225–227, Fig. 8.

¹⁸ E. Ghislanzoni, in: *Notizie degli scavi*, 1912, pp. 39–42, Figs. 5–6; cf. F. Cumont: *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, Paris, 1942, pp. 392–393, Pl. 41:3. Similar terracotta figurines were found in the niches of Pompeii's *Lararia*, see G.K. Boyce: Corpus of the *Lararia* of Pompeii, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 14 (1937), Nos. 42, 202:8, 330. See also A. Levi: *Le terracotte figurate del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, Florence, 1926, p. 183, Nos. 807–809.

¹⁹ Harrison (above, n. 17), Fig. 98; for similar examples, see S. Wide: Grabspende und Totenschlange, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 12 (1909), pp. 221–223, Fig. 1 (= Nilsson [above, n. 13], Pl. 52:3).

²⁰ Cf. G. Wissowa: *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, München, 1912, pp. 176–177; for representations from Pompeii, see Boyce (above, n. 18), Nos. 224, 316, 402. For the bearded snake, see Harrison (above, n. 17), pp. 327–328; Küster (above, n. 17), p. 76, n. 2; also A.B. Cook: *Zeus*, III, Cambridge, 1940, p. 773.

²¹ The author's thanks are due to Annie Caubet, Conservateur au Département des Antiquités Orientales, Musée du Louvre, Paris, for having first suggested this.

her. This image is frequent in Roman sculpture, reliefs and paintings,²² with the shell sometimes replaced by a bowl.²³ On our Panel A the vessel is so clumsily rendered that it could be either object; the place where it merges with the knot at the skirt's top is here shown somewhat less awkwardly than in parallel representations on *terra sigillata*.²⁴

The identification of the woman on our fragment with a nymph poses a problem as nymphs are rarely found in a sepulchral context. There is a rare case where nymphs are shown in the company of *erotes* carrying reversed torches,²⁵ but this comes from a single example of the votive stelae, known in great numbers from the second–third centuries C.E. in Roman Thrace, and the combination has remained unexplained.²⁶

A few representations of a bare-breasted woman, representing the deceased reclining upon a *kline*, are found on the lids of Roman sarcophagi; these have indeed been interpreted as being influenced by the image of the fountain nymph, reclining upon an over-turned water urn. It has been suggested that this representation was intended to identify the deceased with a nymph, playing on the word *νύμφη* — ‘young girl, young woman, bride’.²⁷ Another unique representation of a bare-breasted woman on a lead coffin fragment shows her sitting, perhaps in a pose indicative of mourning.²⁸ In both cases, the baring of the breast might allude to the women's role as mourners.²⁹ Panel A seems to be the only instance where the image of the standing nymph grasping a shell was applied to a lead coffin. It seems that the artisan merged this image with that of the deceased or of a female mourner (more likely the latter), offering drink to two snakes. He might vaguely have understood these as represent-

²² Cf. Roscher: *Lexikon* (above, n. 12), s.v. Nymphen, cols. 564–565. Of the many examples, see S. Reinach: *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine*, Paris, 1897–1931, I, pp. 97, 438; II, p. 405:3, 8; III, p. 122:1; V, p. 94:7; idem, *Répertoire des reliefs grecs et romains*, Paris, 1909–1912, II, p. 492:3; III, pp. 36:5, 79:4, 386:1.

²³ Idem, *Répertoire des peintures grecques et romaines*, Paris, 1922, p. 48:1–3.

²⁴ F. Oswald: *Index of Figure Types on Terra Sigillata*, Liverpool, 1936–37, Pl. 18:339.

²⁵ Cf. our No. 2 (below, p. 130).

²⁶ Halina Danilczuk: *Reliefs thraces des nymphes en Bulgarie*, II^e partie (*Travaux du Centre de l'Académie Polonaise d'archéologie méditerranéenne — Études et Travaux* 10), Warsaw, 1978, p. 135, No. 1.

²⁷ Cumont (above, n. 18), pp. 401–403.

²⁸ Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, p. 59, Pl. 17:2.

²⁹ For ancient prototypes see the remarks of Müfid, col. 443, though these concern a different image; for the baring of breasts as a sign of mourning, as on the sarcophagus of Ahirom from Byblos, see J.B. Pritchard: *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, Princeton, 1954, Fig. 459, about the third century B.C.E.; H. Seyrig: *Bas-relief de Tyr, Syria* 21 (1940), pp. 120–122, Pl. 19; cf. K. Parlasca: *Syrische Grabreliefs hellenistischer und römischer Zeit*, Mainz, 1981, p. 8, Pl. 5:4 and hence to second–third century C.E. Egypt, see E. Pfuhl: *Alexandrinische Grabreliefs, Athenische Mitteilungen* 26 (1901), p. 302; cf. C.C. Edgar: *Greek Sculpture*, Cairo, 1903, p. 39, No. 27540, Pl. 22. For the revival of such ancient oriental elements in Late Roman Syria see Avi-Yonah, pp. 152–153; R. Dussaud: *La renaissance du style oriental en Syrie aux II^e et III^e siècles*, *Artibus Asiae* 6 (1937), pp. 191–202; also M. Avi-Yonah: *Oriental Elements in the Art of Palestine in the Roman and Byzantine Periods I*, *QDAP* 10 (1944), p. 122.

ing the deceased, his male and female ancestors or chthonic deities. There seems no way to establish whether the artisan who prepared this stamp copied a hybrid image of this type from his pattern book, or whether it represents his own eclecticism. Nor can one tell how conscious such an artisan might be of the image's different elements and their implications. The lack of logic inherent in the mixture is not unexpected in this funerary context.³⁰

The representation of two opposed animals with no object separating them,³¹ as found on Panel B, has only once been reported so far on lead coffins, and then with animals in a much more sedate posture.³² Running animals are however found in hunting scenes of the period, from which they were very occasionally transferred to third century lead coffins; these are mainly found in Europe, though lately some have been found in the Near East.³³

Representations of the pursuit of stags or hinds by dogs, lions or bears are included in the bucolic scenes which appear on silver bowls dated to the second half of the third century C.E.³⁴ These include representations of sheep and rams, the latter similar to the animal on the right of our panel, though there it is shown running with its head turned to the front.³⁵ Scenes of animal hunts of this kind abound, including both the pursuit and encounter of the quarry.³⁶ These images were used well into the sixth century C.E.;³⁷ the composition was eventually broken up into its separate components.³⁸

In the case of this example, the animal on the left seems to be either a shepherd's or

³⁰ See the remarks of Nilsson (above, n. 13), p. 199; D.C. Kurtz and J. Boardman: *Greek Burial Customs*, London, 1971, p. 332.

³¹ Unlike the jumping lions, separated by some item, on Panel B of the Caesarea coffin: Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, p. 242, Pl. 29:D; these are jumping away from one another.

³² Avi-Yonah, pp. 94–95, Fig. 2, Pl. LVII:6 (iv); Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, p. 49, Pl. 11:1.

³³ Mercklin—*AA*, cols. 278–280, Fig. 21; Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, p. 247, Pls. 32:B, 33:A–B.

³⁴ Cf. J.W. Brailsford: *The Mildenhall Treasure, A Handbook*², London, 1955, pp. 10–11, No. 10; R. Bianchi Bandinelli: *Rome — The Late Empire*, London, 1971, pp. 206–209, Pl. 196; H.B. Walters: *Catalogue of Silver Plate — Greek, Etruscan and Roman, British Museum*, London, 1921, p. 37, Pl. 22, No. 139.

³⁵ This angle of the animal's head is more usual when it is represented standing, e.g. in the Mildenberg Collection, see A.P. Kozloff (ed.): *Animals in Ancient Art*, Cleveland, 1981, No. 190. For charging rams, see Annalis Leibundgut: *Die römischen Lampen der Schweiz*, Bern, 1977, p. 180, Pl. 48, No. 293; cf. S. Loeschke: *Lampen aus Vindonissa*, Zürich, 1919, Pl. 13:279; Eva-Maria Cahn-Klaiber: *Die antiken Tonlampen des archäologischen Instituts der Universität Tübingen*, Tübingen, 1977, pp. 192–193, No. 165.

³⁶ E.g. Oswald (above, n. 24), Pls. 77–79; cf. also F. Hermet: *La Graufesenque (Condatomago): I. Vases sigilles, II. Graffites*, Paris, 1934, Pl. 66.

³⁷ E.g. M. Avi-Yonah: Une école de mosaïque à Gaza au sixième siècle, *II. Colloque international pour l'étude de la mosaïque antique: La mosaïque greco-romaine*, II, Vienne, (1971) 1975, pp. 377–383 (= idem, *Art in Ancient Palestine*, Jerusalem, 1981, pp. 389–395), Pl. 56:1, lowest row.

³⁸ Thus on the sixth century silver spoons from Cyprus: O.M. Dalton: A Byzantine Silver Treasure from the District of Kerynija, Cyprus, now preserved in the British Museum, *Archaeologia* 57 (1900), Pl. 18; idem, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities. British Museum*, London, 1901, pp. 89–90, Pl. 25.

else a hunting dog, though the possibility that a hyena³⁹ or perhaps even a wolf was intended need by no means be excluded.

The dolphin appearing on Panel C is frequently encountered on lead coffins. Among the many instances of this motif, we may note that on the Tyrian coffin already mentioned,⁴⁰ as well as another example, presumably of Caesarean manufacture.⁴¹ This also holds true of the satyr, well known from Tyrian⁴² and locally found coffins.⁴³

The missing half of the coffin discussed here can only be conjecturally restored: locally, we find lack of symmetric repetition just as often as the opposite.⁴⁴ The latter possibility may perhaps be suggested here, because of the repeated Panel A on the surviving half of the coffin.

2. *The 'Funerary Eros' Coffin*, IDAM 75.713 (Pls. 11–12)

One fragment of this coffin was acquired in Jerusalem in August 1972. Eventually it was joined to a number of other fragments which for a number of years had been stored in the Beersheba Municipal Museum, until brought to the Department's antiquity stores in 1986.⁴⁵ Nothing could be elucidated about the findspot of all these fragments, though it seems very likely that it is located somewhere in the southern part of Judaea. Some of the fragments showed clear signs of having been cut with a modern saw, and the lid had been flattened; this vandalism is presumably the work of modern tomb-robbers or illicit dealers. Most fragments, however, could be joined, and one long side of the coffin was thus almost completely restored, together with most of its left-hand short side, with a small part of its base (Pl. 11:A). Parts of the other long side survive; a small part of the base joined up with these too (Pl. 11:B). Most of the lid was also restored (Pl. 12:A).

It was thus established that the coffin's base, long and short sides had been cast in a single mould, and that the soldering of the coffin's corners had been reinforced on the outside by lead bars. The sides are of uneven thickness, some layers of lead having flaked off, which suggests repeated casting.⁴⁶

³⁹ Cf. the identification of an animal rather similar to that on the left here, D. Levi: *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, Princeton, 1947, p. 364, Pl. 176b: 'a hyena with outstretched legs — hair forms a thorny crest along the back'. See also R. Stillwell *et al.*: *Antioch on-the-Orontes*; II. *The Excavation*, Princeton, 1938, p. 202, Pls. 72–73, No. 90, Section 9.

⁴⁰ Above, n. 7.

⁴¹ Rahmani—*IEJ* 24, Pl. 20.

⁴² Mercklin—*Ber.* 3, pp. 65, 73, Pl. 16:3–4; Mercklin—*Ber.* 5, p. 28, Pl. 5:1; Müfid, Figs. 1, 2, 3, 16.

⁴³ Avi-Yonah, pp. 87–88, Pl. LV:1(ii), p. 145, Fig. 3:24; cf. also Avi-Yonah—*JHS*, p. 300, Pl. XII:1.

⁴⁴ Rahmani (above, n. 41); Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, Pl. 29:A–B.

⁴⁵ By Y. Yisraeli of the Archaeological Survey of Israel, whom the author thanks for bringing these fragments to his attention, and for permitting their publication here.

⁴⁶ For a further example of such casting, see Rahmani—*IEJ* 27, p. 210; for manufacturing methods of these coffins in general see Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, pp. 235–236; to the literature quoted there should be added: J.M.C. Toynbee: *Art in Britain under the Romans*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 345–347.

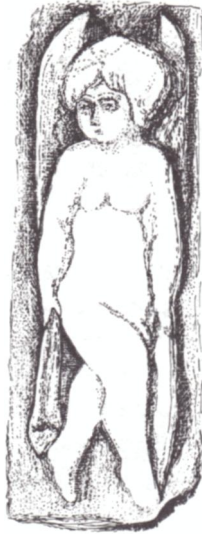


Fig. 3. The 'Funerary Eros' Coffin: the Eros panel.

The coffin is 1.74 m. long, about 0.37 m. to 0.44 m. wide and 0.28 m. high. The lid is up to 0.48 m. wide; parts of it are badly damaged, and at one point are unconnected. The coffin's decoration consists of only three elements: A. A tooth pattern line of very rough and uneven execution, forming frames for more or less equal rectangles, some of which contain a large saltire formed of the same type of toothed line (A-X); B. A cable pattern, applied to the lid only in a similar fashion, including large saltires (B-X); C. A panel showing a winged figure with a lowered torch, twice repeated within some of the rectangles on the long sides and set lengthwise within some rectangles on the lid.

The scheme of decoration on one long side is (A-X)-CC-(A-X)-CC-(A-X)-CC (Pl. 11:A), and on the other CC-(A-X)-CC-(A-X)-CC-(A-X) (Pl. 11:B). On each narrow side, (A-X) appears once and on the lid the sequence is (B-X)-blank-CC-(B-X)-CC-CC-(B-X) (Pl. 12:A).

Pattern A seems to have been executed with a wheel-formed stamp⁴⁷ some 260 mm. in diameter, with three of its teeth partly missing. The motif has so far only been reported twice; once it appears on a fragment which also bears our Panel C, in addition to a twice-repeated representation of a standing, youthful Dionysos.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Cf. Mercklin—*Ber.* 3, p. 55. For a similar stamp, see *British Museum Guide — Greek and Roman Life*³, London, 1929, p. 185, Fig. 205, though there it is made of metal. See also A.H. Levy: *Two Bronze Rouletting Tools*, *IEJ* 35 (1985), pp. 181–182.

⁴⁸ Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, pp. 54–55, No. 12, Pl. 14:1; for the second example, see *ibid.*, No. 13, Pl. 13:6; this shows only one motif, a sitting peacock, considered a Christian motif by Mercklin. Pagan and earlier examples do exist, however — cf. F. Cumont: *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, Paris, 1926, pp. 228–231.

The cable pattern B is a very common one, encountered on lead coffins as far away as Britain.⁴⁹

Panel C, however (Fig. 3, Pl. 12:B), is rare, having been reported only once.⁵⁰ The width of the slightly raised panel is 48 mm. and its height 137 mm.; a small, rounded-off break shows at the panel's lower right corner, near the tip of the figure's foot.⁵¹ The figure is that of a naked boy with a somewhat effeminate body; he tiptoes to his left, his right leg crossed over his left. His large wings are folded back, curving slightly inwards above and behind his head. The upper part of his body is turned towards the front, while his round face turns slightly backwards. His abundant hair covers part of his forehead and his ears. Both his arms are lowered; in his right hand he carries a lowered torch, while his left holds back some light drapery, which seems to have fallen backwards from his throat.

Mercklin, who once again was forced to rely on an unclear photograph of a rather indistinct imprint of this image, still suggested that possibly a 'genius of death' (*Todesdämon*) was represented, though he was unable to identify any details.⁵² Our specimen enables us to do so now, identifying the figure as that of Eros as genius of death.⁵³ *Erotes* as such are frequently encountered on lead coffins.⁵⁴ The exact pose shown in our representation, though, seems to appear only rarely, in a few cases when Eros is shown carrying a round closed box; his light drapery is shown fluttering

⁴⁹ H. Toller: *Roman Lead Coffins and Ossuaries in Britain* (British Archaeological Reports, 38), London, 1977, Fig. 4. It is also found on a lid somewhat reminiscent of ours: Mercklin—A.A, cols. 273–274, Fig. 16.

⁵⁰ Mercklin (above, n. 48), p. 55. A variant may exist at Cannes Municipal Museum, cf. J. Billiet: La collection Lycklama au Musée de Cannes, *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, VI^e pér., 6; 73 (1931), p. 334. M.E. Chenesseau of the Museum's administration kindly informed me that because of re-organization no details or photographs are at present obtainable.

⁵¹ An identical break seems to occur in the specimen published by Mercklin; from the photograph it is impossible to determine whether both come from the same mould.

⁵² Mercklin (above, n. 50).

⁵³ See for this Daremberg and Saglio: *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, s.v. Cupido, p. 1610; *PWRE*, s.v. Thanatos, cols. 1267–1268, and s.v. Eros, cols. 508–509; A. Furtwängler in Roscher: *Lexicon* (above, n. 12), s.v. Eros, cols. 1368–1369; C. Robert: *Archäologische Hermeneutik*, Berlin, 1919, p. 60. See also G.E. Lessing: *Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet*, 1769. Obviously this image of the *genius mortis* as a boy must be distinguished from the more sombre representations, even though these lead up to it. See for this C. Robert: *Thanatos* (39. *Programm zum Winkelmannfeste der archäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin*), Berlin, 1879, pp. 36–44; W.R. Lethaby: The Sculptures of the Later Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 33 (1913), pp. 87–91; M.M. Collignon: *Les statues funéraires dans l'art grec*, Paris, 1911, pp. 329–341; Cumont (above, n. 18), pp. 409–412; *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, s.v. Eros, cols. 334–339; K. Schauenberger: Portraits auf römischen Sarkophagen, *Eikonos, Studien zum griechischen und römischen Bildnis* (Festschrift H. Jucker), Bern, 1980, pp. 153–159; Koch-Sichtermann, p. 207. For the original significance of the torch in this context, see also P. Boyancé: *Funus acerbum*, *Revue des Études Anciennes* 54 (1952), pp. 275–289.

⁵⁴ Mercklin—Ber. 6, pp. 39–42; vintaging *erotes* are practically the Jerusalem coffins' trademark: Avi-Yonah, pp. 149–150; cf. Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, p. 234, n. 2.

in the wind.⁵⁵ All these specimens originate in the Beirut area and are dated to the third century C.E.

The nearest parallel to our image comes from that region and has been dated to about the late second century C.E. It appears on a child's stone sarcophagus, where a similar Eros with lowered torch is seen dancing with the deceased.⁵⁶

3. *The Ashdod Coffin*, IDAM 86.502 (Pls. 13:A,B,C; 14:A)

This coffin was found during an emergency excavation undertaken in the spring of 1986 in the dunes of Ashdod-Yam (map ref. 1148 1235); it was discovered in a masonry tomb, covered with stone slabs. This was one of a row of five similar tombs, but was the only one to contain such a coffin, the rest holding only one skeleton each. All showed signs of looting in the past.⁵⁷

The coffin is partly damaged, but could be fully reconstructed. Its length is 1.92 m., its width very irregular, amounting at one end to 0.38 m. and at the other to 0.45 m. Its height varies similarly from side to side: 0.36 m. and 0.45 m. The base and all the sides were cast in a single mould; the soldered corners were reinforced on the outside with lead bars. The base's inside was found to be slightly raised lengthwise.

The decoration was executed with a single stamp (A), which appears upside down, thrice repeated on the upper third of each long side (Pl. 13:A). On each short side, twice repeated, it forms a saltire; this stamping obliterated the centre of the motif (Pl. 13:B). On both sides of the lid's length the panel was again applied thrice (Pl. 13:C), with the base of the panel in each case parallel and juxtaposed to that on the coffin's long sides, thus forming the pattern:

Lid	A	A	A
Coffin	∇	∇	∇

The panel (Pl. 14:A) is 335 mm. long and 85 mm. high, raised and framed on all its sides by a simple, heavy bar. It carries in its centre the representation of an amphora with volute handles, scalloped rim, twisted neck, fluted body and broad base. From this vessel's mouth issue two short vine-scrolls, each containing a clumsily-formed bunch of grapes, pushed aside rather than suspended. A vine-leaf and a tendril are attached to the coils' exterior. The amphora is flanked by two birds, their bodies turned outwards and their heads turned back, beaks pointing towards the amphora's rim.

⁵⁵ R. Mouterde: Sarcophages de plomb trouvés en Syrie, *Syria* 10 (1929), p. 243, Pl. 45:1, 2; Chéhab—Syr. 15, p. 346, Pl. 45:15a; Mercklin—Ber. 3, pp. 57–58, Pl. 9:5; Mercklin—Ber. 6, p. 42, Pl. 12:15; Anne Marguerite McCann: *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 1978, p. 150, No. 28.

⁵⁶ F. Cumont: Un sarcophage d'enfant trouvé à Beyrouth, *Syria* 10 (1929), pp. 222–237, Pl. 40:1 (left); cf. also Pl. 41:2. Our coffin was obviously intended for an adult, perhaps a maiden who died before marriage — cf. *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, s.v. Fackel (Kerze), col. 161.

⁵⁷ The author's thanks are due to S. Pipano for his kind permission to publish this coffin and relevant details, pending his publication of this excavation.

Nearest in form to our amphora is that appearing on some of the Beth She'arim coffins, though there it lacks the flanking birds.⁵⁸ Where birds are depicted on other lead coffins, perching with turned heads within a vine-scroll coil, they are shown as doing so in order to pick at a grape cluster.⁵⁹ The motif appearing in our panel's centre seems thus to be the first example of this type known on recorded lead coffins,⁶⁰ adding to the repertoire of such panels showing vine-scrolls, with or without vessels and birds. The rather careless obliteration of this central motif when applying the panel to this coffin's short side is also rare, though saltire-wise stamped panels containing vine-scrolls do at times appear, forming rhombs which serve as frames for some central motif.⁶¹

4. *The Ashkelon Fragment*, IDAM 85.502 (Pl. 14:B)

This fragment was discovered by chance in 1975 in the dunes near Ashkelon and was eventually presented to the Department.⁶² It is the left-hand part of a coffin's long side, with some of the soldering bar still adhering at its edge. Its remaining length is 0.70 m. and its height (where complete) 0.35 m.

The border frieze above is composed of volute-handled kalyx-kraters, each flanked by a vine-stem: from the stem on the left issue some tendrils, while the right-hand stem has both tendrils and a bunch of grapes. The krater's angular handles are indicated by dots. Below, the field is bordered by a vine-scroll with alternating vine-leaves and horizontally-poised bunches of grapes. The field is divided by columns, the upper two-thirds of whose shafts are twisted, while their lower parts are subdivided by three saltires. Bases and capitals seem to represent the Corinthian order.

Each of the intercolumnar spaces contains a circular frame formed of sections of undulating cable, similar to those used on the side borders. Here as well, these form a sort of vine-scroll, its curves filled with bunches of grapes alternating with vine-leaves. This frame contains a Gorgon head with small wings in its hair inside a cable-patterned ring; under it appears a replica of the krater from the border frieze above. The outer intercolumnar space is vertically halved by the coffin's edge.

The krater is nearest in form, including the peculiar rendering of the handle by dots, to those on the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate's coffin,⁶³ though its flanking vines differ in form and display. Both coffins have in common the circular scroll

⁵⁸ Avigad, Pl. 63:2. See also p. 178, Fig. 89:1-3.

⁵⁹ Müfid, col. 392, B 6, Fig. 13; Bertin, p. 61, Fig. 4; p. 62, Fig. 6; Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, p. 242, Pl. 29 C, Panel A.

⁶⁰ Birds flanking a basket, with heads turned back to pick at bunches of grapes issuing from the basket's rim, are known from first century C.E. gems, e.g. *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen: München*, I/2, 1970, Pl. 180, No. 2054; *Antike Gemmen, Hannover*, IV, Wiesbaden, 1975, Pl. 91, No. 706.

⁶¹ E.g. Müfid, col. 392, No. 7, Fig. 16; Avi-Yonah—*JHS*, Pl. XII:3; Avi-Yonah, p. 91, Fig. 1; Chéhab—*Syr.* 16, p. 58, No. 38; Avigad, Pl. 67:1-3.

⁶² Thanks for this valuable gift are due to Mrs. Tova Berlinsky of Jerusalem.

⁶³ Avi-Yonah, Pl. LV:1 (i, ii).

fashioned of cable sections framing a central element, though lacking leaves and grapes on the Patriarchate's specimen.⁶⁴ Similarly formed borders appear on Tyrian coffins.

That city's coffins also use the motif of the Corinthian column with twisted upper part,⁶⁵ a motif encountered in Israel only at ez-Zib, in the north.⁶⁶ In both these cases, however, the unique scoring of the lower third of the column's shaft with saltires is absent, as are the cable-patterned circular undulating frames. Our Gorgon head also has parallels at both Sidon⁶⁷ and Tyre, where it also appears in a cable circle;⁶⁸ in concept and style it is actually closest to an example from Beirut.⁶⁹

5. *The Infant's Coffin*, IDAM 40.1246 (Pls. 14:C; 15:A,B)

This coffin was purchased in Jerusalem in 1940. Nothing is known of its place of discovery: it may have been in this country, or possibly somewhere in Lebanon. The coffin is badly worn; its lid is missing. It is 0.38 m. long, about 0.20 m. wide and about 0.20 m. high. The base and all the sides were cast in a single mould; narrow lead bars reinforced the soldered corners on the exterior. The lid is missing.

Both long sides show similar decoration: three astragal-framed rectangles, the central one somewhat wider than those on either side. Each contains a saltire formed of astragal rods; the reels between the beads are rectangular. The upper central triangle contains a human mask with head band (Panel A), decorated with clusters of fruit or flowers (Pl. 15:B); the mask is 30 mm. long and 36 mm. high. Both narrow sides carry decoration similar to the central panel of the long sides (Pl. 15:A).

The display and use of astragal rods on this small coffin find their nearest parallel in a child's coffin from Beirut,⁷⁰ though this has no subdivision into rectangles. These, however, appear on the lid of an adult's coffin from the same tomb.⁷¹

As far as one can judge from the published illustration, the human mask on our coffin finds its closest parallel on a fragmentary coffin from the Tyre region; this example has the subdivision into triangles executed with astragal rods as well, containing rectangular reels between their beads.⁷² This feature is so far unknown from locally made lead coffins.

⁶⁴ Mainly on lids: *ibid.*, Pl. LV:1 (i), but usually forming orderly rhombs, at times using cable-sections, e.g. Bertin, p. 65, Fig. 9.

⁶⁵ Mercklin—*Ber.* 5, Pls. 7:2, 8:1; *idem*, 6, Pl. 9:1–2; Bertin, p. 74, Fig. 22; Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, p. 339, No. 1b, Pl. 41:1; Hajjar, p. 50, Fig. 3. McCann (above, n. 55), pp. 143–148, Nos. 25–26.

⁶⁶ Avi-Yonah—*JHS*, p. 301, Pl. XII:1; *ibid.*, pp. 304–307, on the antecedents of this column. Also Avi-Yonah, pp. 89–90, No. 2, Pl. LV:2 (i); pp. 144–146, Fig. 3:20 (dated to the third century).

⁶⁷ Avi-Yonah—*JHS*, p. 301, n. 8.

⁶⁸ Hajjar, Pl. V, No. 382, where further elements similar to ours appear, though in much more elaborate arrangements; see also Bertin, pp. 66–67, Figs. 10–12, from the Tyre region.

⁶⁹ Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, p. 53, No. 6, Pl. 13:1.

⁷⁰ Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, p. 349, No. 22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Pl. 48, No. 23.

⁷² Mercklin—*Ber.* 5, p. 40, No. 2, Pls. 11:4, 12:1; for the form of the astragals see *ibid.*, p. 37, V. Somewhat similar masks also appear on the Beirut coffin — see Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, Pl. 44, No. 11, side.

The use of cable and astragal rods, and their application in subdivisions, either rectangular or triangular with saltires, is found as far afield as Britain, France and Germany.⁷³ In our case, however, the small mask within this type of frame is close to that found on the Beirut examples, while its form appears on the Tyre coffin.

This very small coffin, obviously intended for a baby, remains a rarity; the only other published example, very different in appearance, comes from the vicinity of Jericho.⁷⁴

6. *The Beitin Lid*, IDAM 45.88 (Pl. 15:C,D)

This lid is a chance find, having turned up in 1945 on private land at Beitin,⁷⁵ in one small and two large fragments. These join up at one point and thus give its dimensions as 1.89 m. in length and 0.60 m. in width. All its edges are rounded; those at the short sides show slits, intended for the insertion of tongues which originally fastened the lid to the coffin's short sides.

The lid's surface is divided by a cable pattern into rectangles, some of which are sub-divided by two long cables, connecting the lid's corners diagonally. The upper and lower central compartments each contain a twice repeated identical panel (A), its details rather indistinct: it shows a large ring, its diameter 90 mm., containing a rather small human mask (about 45 mm. in diameter), with wavy strands of hair, deep-set eyes, a wide upper lip and a small, pointed beard (Pl. 15:D).

A large Greek inscription runs through the four central compartments, reading CA/BIN/IAN/OY — 'Of Sabinianos' (Pl. 15:C) — the name of the deceased.

The cable pattern on the lid is reminiscent of lead coffins which show such patterns on all their sides, thus giving the impression — perhaps intentional — of a box securely tied with cord; this motif is encountered as near home as Beth She'arim, Tyre and Beirut⁷⁶ and as far afield as Britain.⁷⁷ Cables used as frames and diagonals are encountered frequently on Jerusalem coffins from the early third⁷⁸ to the late fifth centuries (see below, Nos. 8–13).

The mask within rather too wide a ring appears on several Beirut coffins.⁷⁹ Our mask does not seem to be paralleled on any known coffin. It somewhat resembles a lion-mask, but these invariably have a full mane, extending down to the lower parts

⁷³ Mercklin—*AA*, cols. 271–274, Figs. 14, 16–18; cf. Toller (above, n. 49), Fig. 4.

⁷⁴ J. Garrow Duncan: A Leaden Ossuary, *PEFQS* 58 (1925), pp. 65–67; McCann (above, n. 55), p. 149, No. 27 (unaware of Duncan's publication); it obviously differs from Jewish ossuaries in its material, ornamentation and date. It displays a clumsy use of elements mainly familiar from Tyrian coffins, e.g. Hajjar, Pl. 15; Bertin, Figs. 11–14.

⁷⁵ See for this site *EAEHL*, s.v. Bethel, and literature quoted there.

⁷⁶ Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, p. 341, Nos. 2–3; Chéhab—*Syr.* 16, Pl. 12, No. 24 (lid); Avigad, p. 176, Fig. 87.

⁷⁷ Mercklin (above, n. 73), commenting on his Fig. 14: '...gibt das Strickleistenornament den Eindruck wirklicher Verschnürung wieder'.

⁷⁸ E.g. Avi-Yonah, Pls. LVIII, LIX; Rahmani—*At.*, Pl. 21; Rahmani—*IEJ* 27, Pl. 27:A; Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, Pl. 27:B.

⁷⁹ Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, Pls. 44:11, 45:18.

of the head, and a ring, either suspended from the beast's muzzle or hanging right under it⁸⁰ — all of which is missing in our head. One thus cannot suggest an identification.

Inscribed lead coffins are rare; the very few examples published include four from our region and two from Cilicia⁸¹ — incidentally most with reversed writing. The name of the deceased represents the Hellenized form of the Latin name *Sabinianus*, rarely encountered before the third century C.E.⁸²

7. *The Monogrammatic Cross Fragment*, IDAM M.1081 (Pl. 15:E)

This fragment, of unknown origin, was acquired in 1928. Its measurements are 21.5 cm. × 25.5 cm.

A monogrammatic Greek cross (*crux quadrata*) appears in rather high relief in reverse; its central lines are deeply incised. Greek crosses — simple and not monogrammatic, but executed in a manner identical to that of our specimen — appear on four large fragments which together form one complete lid of a lead coffin, 1.85 m. long and 0.42 m. high, exhibited at the Museum of the Flagellation, Jerusalem.⁸³ A lid fragment with identical decoration, belonging to the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto,⁸⁴ must have come from the same workshop. Conceivably our fragment formed part of a coffin covered with one of these lids.

⁸⁰ On lead coffins: Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, Pl. 43, Nos. 9–10; on stone coffins in second–third century C.E. Sidon: F. Baratte and C. Metzger: *Catalogue des sarcophages en pierre d'époques romaine et paléochrétienne*, Louvre, Paris, 1985, pp. 294–296, Nos. 196–197.

⁸¹ Chéhab—*Syr.* 16, p. 54, No. 30, of unknown origin, probably pagan; M. Piccirillo: *Chiese e mosaici della Giordania settentrionale*, Jerusalem, 1981, p. 31, Pl. 17:18, from Umm Keis; R. Mouterde: *Divinités et symboles sur les sarcophages de plomb, Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph, Beyrouth* 21 (1937), p. 204, Fig. 1, from Homs, both of Christian character and local workmanship; *ibid.*, pp. 205–206, Pl. 52:1, from Emesa, the only non-reversed one, surrounds and praises an image of Zeus Olympios; D. Ussishkin: *Two Lead Coffins from Cilicia, IEJ* 27 (1977), pp. 215–218, Fig. 1, Pl. 30:A — this coffin is probably Jewish; both it and the second one displaying a *menorah* repeated four times inside the coffin should be seen as locally executed. Its poor workmanship is unlike anything from Phoenician factors; the clumsy, retrograde inscription, must have been made to the order of a local customer.

⁸² Cf. *PWRE*, s.v. Sabinianus; also *Supplement*, XIV.

⁸³ B. Bagatti: *Il Museo della Flagellazione in Gerusalemme*, Jerusalem, 1939, p. 45, No. 50, Fig. 19; the date there quoted (Crusader) must be rejected. The specimen is said to have come from the Gaza region; it is certainly a lid. Thanks are due to Father M. Piccirillo, O.F.M., Curator of the museum, for having shown it to the author.

⁸⁴ Mercklin—*AA*, cols. 257–259, Fig. 3. Thanks are due to B. Pratt of the museum's West Asian Department for the information that this fragment is noted as having come from Hebron, and that a further similar lid of unknown origin was acquired by the museum in 1936. The overall decoration on both the Jerusalem and the Toronto specimens consists of Greek crosses, each within a stepped square (i.e. two interlaced squares, the sides of the one at a 90° angle to those of the second); see for this M. Avi-Yonah: *Oriental Elements in Palestinian Art, QDAP* 14 (1950), pp. 74–75, Fig. 31 and in particular a local mosaic floor dated between 427 and 486 in Avi-Yonah: *The Mosaic Pavements*, in M.W. Prausnitz *et al.*: *Excavations at Shavei Zion*, Rome, 1967, pp. 57, 59, Pl. 32a, upper left. The three fragments discussed here show on one end only (the head end?) an unframed row of three of these crosses; their number may perhaps be significant. One is reminded of contemporary thrice-repeated motifs understood to allude to

Our motif must be distinguished from the christogram (or Chi-Rho) which appears on Sidonian lead coffins up to the first half of the fourth century C.E.,⁸⁵ as well as on a mid-fourth century Jerusalem coffin; there this christogram is applied in broad and clumsy bands covering its whole lid, with a simple Latin cross (*crux immissa*) on its long and short sides.⁸⁶ Here, however, we encounter the monogrammatic cross (or cross-monogram), which makes its appearance towards the mid-fourth century, and remains dominant to the mid-fifth, mainly in the East.⁸⁷ The probability that our specimen belongs to a coffin which also bore Greek crosses makes a date in the late fourth or early fifth centuries likely.⁸⁸

the Trinity, e.g. the thrice-repeated letter *yod* in ancient Hebrew script on the low-level mosaic of the Evron church, dated to 415 C.E.; see M. Avi-Yonah: Christian Archaeology in Israel, *Christian News from Israel*, 5 (1955), p. 22; idem, Places of Worship — the Roman and Byzantine Periods, *Antiquity and Survival* 2 (1957), p. 270, Fig. 10; see also *EAEHL*, s.v. Churches — Evron, pp. 306–307. One finds the monograms of Christ, contained in an aedicula, thrice-repeated on Sidonian Christian lead coffin lids, see Billiet (above, n. 50), pp. 333–335, Fig. 27; Mercklin—*AA*, col. 264; Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, pp. 55–57, Nos. 14–18; Leclercque: *Dictionnaire*, s.v. Cercueils, cols. 3282–3284, Figs. 2356–2358. Such triple repetition may well have been significant to Jews of that period as well; Jewish coffins from the same workshop show a thrice-repeated *menorah* — e.g. Avigad, Pls. 42, 44. For further instances of such three-fold repetition in Byzantine times, see J. Clédât: *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, I, Cairo, 1904, p. 150; J. Maspero: Bracelets-amulettes d'époque Byzantine, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 9 (1908), p. 248; J. Engemann: Zu den Dreifaltigkeitsdarstellungen der frühchristlichen Kunst, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 19 (1976), p. 158; for thrice-repeated crosses to ward off evil, cf. Leclercque, above, s.v. Croix (signe de la), col. 3143; F.X. Kraus: *Real Encyclopädie der Christlichen Alterthümer*, s.v. Kreuzzeichen, p. 253; F.J. Dölger: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Kreuzzeichens, VIII, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 8/9 (1965–1966), p. 11 for examples up to the eighth century C.E.

⁸⁵ See Billiet (above, n. 50); Mercklin—*AA*, cols. 257–259, Fig. 3; the date is provided by a Jewish counterpart of this coffin from Beth She'arim — Avigad, p. 182.

⁸⁶ Avi-Yonah, p. 99, No. 13, Pls. LIX:13 (i, ii), LX:13 (iii); the date (about 330–360 C.E.) was established by a headband with the impression of a Constantinian medal, for which see H. Cohen: *Description historique des monnaies*, VII, Paris, 1888, p. 324, No. 3. For the christogram, monogrammatic cross and crosses in general, see M. Sulzberger: Le symbole de la croix et les monogrammes de Jésus chez les premiers chrétiens, *Byzantion* 2 (1926), pp. 337–448, and F.J. Dölger: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Kreuzzeichens, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 1–9 (1958–1967), *passim*.

⁸⁷ Sulzberger (above, n. 86), pp. 393, 428, 433–435. For its appearance at about 350 C.E. in Egypt, see Leclercque: *Dictionnaire*, s.v. Pédagogie, cols. 2908–2922, Fig. 10032; cf. Dölger (above, n. 86), 3 (1960), pp. 7, 10–11. See also J.W. Hayes: *Late Roman Pottery*, London, 1972, p. 275, No. 304, Fig. 55:1; dated on p. 219 to 450–480 C.E.; p. 363, Nos. 61, Fig. 78:e, f; dated on p. 349 to 360–450 C.E. For Syria see: *Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria*, III: W.K. Prentice: *Greek and Latin Inscriptions, Section B: Northern Syria*, Leiden, 1922, p. 131, No. 1096, of 401 C.E.; *ibid.*, E. Littmann: *Greek and Latin Inscriptions, Section A: Southern Syria*, Leiden, 1921, p. 136, tentatively dated to 412–413 C.E. On local mosaics, see Avi-Yonah in Prausnitz *et al.* (above, n. 84), Fig. 9 (Evron) — dated to 415 C.E. and B. Bagatti: *Excavations in Nazareth*, I, Jerusalem, 1969, p. 99, Fig. 55, Pl. 6, top; dated (p. 107) 'prior to 427'. For a possible further example from the West, see E. von Mercklin: Ein altchristlicher Bleisarkophag mit Reliefschmuck im Thermenmuseum zu Rom, *Berytus* 11 (1954–55), pp. 67–74, Pl. 12:1–3.

⁸⁸ For examples, see Sulzberger (above, n. 86), pp. 433, 435. Also F.M. Abel: Inscription chrétienne du Ghôr es-Sâfî, *RB* 40 (1931), pp. 95–98, dated to 387/8 C.E.

8–13. *The Beit Şafafa Coffins* (Pls. 16–18)

Drainage work undertaken in the autumn of 1952 near the village of Beit Şafafa on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem (map ref. 16899 12868-9) uncovered an underground burial structure, partly built of ashlar masonry and consisting of eight tombs, each with a white mosaic floor and stone-slab covering. It seems that this structure was found in secondary use.⁸⁹ One tomb, oriented north–south, and the two southernmost tombs were empty. The two remaining pairs of tombs each contained one large coffin, while a single tomb on the structure's northern side contained two small ones. To the north of this, a funerary chapel was discovered, measuring 7 × 8 m., with mosaic floors including a dedicatory inscription of four lines, dated to the year 206 of an unknown era which should perhaps be equated with 491 C.E.⁹⁰ The pottery finds from this site were dated to the sixth century C.E.

All the coffins in this group were manufactured in an identical way: the long sides and base were cast in a single mould; each short side was cast separately and then soldered to the edges of the base and long sides, using lead bars for reinforcement at the inner corners. All have slightly vaulted lids, fastened with tongues issuing from the short side's apex and passing through slits at the lid's short edges.

The decoration of most of the coffins of this group is very similar, showing a division of the long sides by diagonal cables forming rhombs, and both horizontal and diagonal cables forming rhombs on most of the lids; this pattern is completely lacking only on No. 13. Each coffin's long sides show an identical scheme of decoration, but for No. 10 this is also true of the short sides. Only Latin crosses were applied; all circlets are cable-patterned and may have been intended to represent wreaths.

No. 8, IDAM 52.1150 (Pl. 16:A)

Length 1.79 m., width 0.34 m. and height 0.23 m.; its narrow sides are about 0.34 m. high. The lid's original length was 1.85 m., with the surplus folded over the short sides' rims and tongues tightly clamped down on the lid.

The long sides show within each of the two rhombs two large horizontally poised crosses; the outer triangles contain two small, upright ones. The three upper and lower triangles each contain a circlet. The short sides each show an upright cross with a circlet above it. The lid is partitioned lengthwise into three sections; its central part is divided into five rhombs, each containing a cross posed lengthwise; there is a cross

⁸⁹ The site was excavated by J.H. Landau: Excavation of a Family Tomb in the Vicinity of Beit Şafafa, *Bulletin of the Department of Antiquities of the State of Israel* 5/6 (1957), pp. 40–42 (Hebrew). The author's thanks are due to the excavator for his permission to publish the coffins here. A brief mention in English of this excavation may be found in Notes and News, *IEJ* 3 (1953), p. 266; S. Yeivin: Archaeology in Israel (1951–1953), *AJA* 59 (1955), p. 166, Figs. 24–25 and idem, *A Decade of Archaeology in Israel*, Istanbul, 1960, pp. 45–46; also *EAEHL*, s.v. Jerusalem, p. 621.

⁹⁰ Thus M. Avi-Yonah: A Note on the Date of the Inscription from Beit Şafafa, *Bulletin* (above, n. 89), p. 43 (Hebrew). See also *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 16 (1959), p. 226, No. 850; B. Lifshitz: Beiträge zur palästinischen Epigraphik, *ZDPV* 78 (1962), pp. 79–80, No. Iib.

or a circlet in each of the other triangles. Both flanks of the lid show three upright crosses and circlets alternating within cable triangles; an additional small triangle, containing a circlet, appears on only one side.

*No. 9, IDAM 52.969*⁹¹ (Pl. 16:B)

Length 1.74 m., width 0.33 m., height 0.22 m.; the narrow side is about 0.35 m. high. The lid's original length was 1.78 m. It is practically identical in all details of its decoration to No. 8.

No. 10, IDAM 52.800 (Pl. 16:C)

Length 1.82 m., width about 0.42 m., height 0.30 m.; its narrow sides rise to 0.43 m. Length of lid 1.95 m.

The two central rhombs of the long sides each contain a large upright cross; all the outer triangles contain only circlets. One short side shows the cross above the circlet; the other shows it under the circlet. The lid is divided lengthwise into three compartments, the central one remaining bare, while the flanking ones carry three upright crosses alternating with three circlets.

No. 11, IDAM 53.1269 (Pl. 17:A,B)

Length 1.69 m., width 0.44 m., height 0.27 m.; its narrow sides rise to about 0.38 m.; length of lid about 1.81 m.

The two central rhombs of the long sides each contain a large upright cross; there are upright, small ones in each of the outer triangles, while those above and below contain circlets (Pl. 17:A). The narrow sides show three upright crosses; the central, slightly bigger one appears above the level of the two others, with a circlet under it (Pl. 17:B). The lid, partitioned lengthwise into three compartments, has three rhombs in its centre, each containing a cross placed lengthwise; there is a circlet in each of its outer triangles. Both sides of the lid show a metope arrangement, containing five upright crosses alternating with four circlets.

No. 12, IDAM 52.801 (Pl. 17:C)

Length 0.89 m., width 0.25 m., height 0.17 m.; its narrow sides rise to about 0.27 m.

The lid has its surplus length folded over the short sides' rims, and the tongues are tightly clamped down on the lid. The two central rhombs of the long sides each contain a large upright cross; similar ones appear on each short side. The lid, partitioned only by diagonals, contains within each of its two rhombs a large cross, poised lengthwise; a third cross appears in one of the outer triangles, and there is a circle in each of the flanking triangles, with one additional circlet running across the fold on one narrow side.

No. 13, IDAM 53.1270 (Pl. 18:A-C)

Length 0.93 m., width 0.27 m., height 0.16 m.; its narrow sides rise to 0.28 m. Length of lid 1.0 m.

⁹¹ In the framework of a Division of Finds agreement in 1961, the Department gave this coffin to the Municipal Museum of Milan.

This is the only coffin of this group without any cable pattern division. Its long sides (Pl. 18:B) each have similar crosses. The badly damaged lid has three large crosses placed lengthwise in its centre, and on each of its sides four circlets.⁹²

The disposition and number of the crosses and circlets on these coffins may well be fortuitous, though the numbers three⁹³ and seven recur frequently.⁹⁴ All but one of the coffins have three crosses in the centre of the lid; the one which does not (No. 10), has three crosses on each of the lid's sides. One (No. 8) adds to this scheme on its lid a cross above the head and the feet of the deceased, in addition to three crosses on each of the lid's sides. The infants' coffins (Nos. 12 and 13) show three crosses on both their long sides and on their lids' central axis, as well as one on each of the short sides — above the head and below the feet of the deceased (Pl.18:C). This decorative scheme appears on all coffins except No. 11, on which the central one of the three crosses is larger and elevated, with a circlet under it. This arrangement is echoed by crosses painted on the back walls of central arcosolia in two different Byzantine tombs in Jerusalem; in one case with palm branches at the foot of the central cross,⁹⁵ in the other with a wreath around it.⁹⁶ This image may perhaps have been intended as an allusion to the image of the crucifixion, as on Byzantine eulogia ampullae, bracelets, rings etc.⁹⁷

Whatever the possible significance of the number of crosses applied on the sides and lids of these coffins, no doubt can exist about their intended apotropaic function.⁹⁸

CONCLUSIONS

Places and Dates of Manufacture

The Netanya fragment has one motif — the woman with the snakes — in common with a Sidonian coffin, and another — the *pedum*-carrying satyr — with Tyrian ones. In our specimen, however, most of the decoration is very different from the northern examples. Humans and animals appear on two isocephalic levels, on a bare background; this and their symmetric arrangement contrast with the usual Phoenician

⁹² Landau (above, n. 89) notes the remains of an infant, only a few months old, in one of these coffins.

⁹³ See n. 84 above.

⁹⁴ For this number's importance for the early Christians see Kraus (above, n. 84), s.v. Zahlen und Ziffern, pp. 999–1000. For numbers in magic and religion cf. also *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen, 1931, s.v. Zahlen.

⁹⁵ M.J. Legrange: *Lettre de Jérusalem*, *RB* 1 (1892), p. 450; flanking crosses also appear on the sides of the arches of all three arcosolia, *ibid.*, p. 451.

⁹⁶ W.J. Moulton: A Painted Christian Tomb at Beit Jibrin, *AASOR* 2–3 (1923), p. 99, Pl. 4.

⁹⁷ L.Y. Rahmani: On Some Byzantine Brass Rings in the State Collection, *'Atiqot* (English Series) 17 (1985), p. 175, and literature quoted there, nn. 88–93.

⁹⁸ For a similar contemporary magical safeguarding of buildings, ecclesiastical as well as secular, against all evil by the application of crosses on all their sides, see J. Engemann: Magische Übelabwehr in der Spätantike, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 8 (1975), pp. 42–48.

scheme of columns supporting a frieze, with major motifs appearing in the intercolumnar spaces, at times alternating with garlands suspended halfway down these spaces.⁹⁹

The display of motifs on our fragment is found on coffins which come from the Caesarea region, such as those from Emeq Ḥefer and Caesarea, and probably also the one now in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate,¹⁰⁰ with which our specimen incidentally also shares the satyr motif mentioned above. We would thus ascribe this fragment too to the Caesarea workshop, which functioned from the late second to some time in the third century C.E.

The Eros coffin has a motif, frames and a decorative scheme in common with an unusual specimen, which must have originated somewhere in Lebanon; it shares its trapezoid lid with a group of early fourth century coffins from Tyre.¹⁰¹ Taking into account the probable provenance of our specimen and our assumption that fragments of this rather unattractive coffin would not have been imported to two different places in Palestine, it seems likely that it was made somewhere in southern Judaea. Beth Guvrin (Eleutheropolis) might well have been the place, at some time in the late third–early fourth centuries; the fragments of another coffin of rather clumsy workmanship were also discovered in that region.¹⁰² For both these examples one would thus suggest a workshop in this city, perhaps headed by a Phoenician.

The Ashdod lead coffin is so far the only one found at that site, which at the period in question had become a poor and unimportant town. One might thus consider this coffin the work of an itinerant artisan. More likely, though, it was the work of the nearby Ashkelon workshop.¹⁰³ As well as its method of manufacture, it shares with examples from Ashkelon a vine-scroll used as the only decorative motif, also found on the Hedera coffin.¹⁰⁴ Another typical feature is the rather clumsy design of the bunch of grapes, as seen on the second Ni'ilya coffin; this would thus imply a date for our coffin in the early fourth century C.E.¹⁰⁵

The Ashkelon fragment should certainly be ascribed to that city's workshops; though it displays features familiar from Tyrian, Beirut and Caesarean coffins, these are here executed in a local, rather provincial manner, e.g. the crude halving of a major image and the peculiar saltire-scoring of the columns' lower parts.¹⁰⁶ A date around the mid-third century seems likely here.

⁹⁹ Müfid, col. 391, No. B 3, Fig. 14; Mercklin—*Ber.* 6, pp. 37–38, b 5, Pl. 6:5.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, pp. 241–250.

¹⁰¹ Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, pp. 340–342, Nos. 2–6; Avigad, p. 176, Fig. 87, p. 181; but also at Tyre — Billiet (above, n. 50), pp. 333–335, Figs. 25–27.

¹⁰² L.Y. Rahmani: *Miscellanea — Roman to Medieval: A Lead Coffin from the Judean Foothills, 'Atiqot* (English Series) 14 (1980), p. 109.

¹⁰³ Avi-Yonah, pp. 148–149.

¹⁰⁴ Avi-Yonah, Pl. LVII:7 (i, ii, iv); for Hedera see Avigad, p. 179, Fig. 90, Pl. 74:4, which might have been manufactured at a Caesarea workshop.

¹⁰⁵ Avi-Yonah (above, n. 104).

¹⁰⁶ This also holds true of other minor features found on Ashkelon coffins, e.g. comparing the rosettes in

The Infant's Coffin shows certain affinities with the products of Beirut and Tyre workshops, though no coffins of such a small size are known from there. One might thus consider it the handiwork of some itinerant artisan, perhaps from Tyre, at some time in the third century; incidentally, he might also have produced the only other infant's lead coffin known — the one from Jericho.

The Beitin lid, though showing links with Beirut workshops, must certainly have been produced by order of a local mourner, very likely by an itinerant artisan. The coffin's style¹⁰⁷ as well as the name of the deceased indicate a date towards the end of the third–early fourth centuries.

The Christian coffins, including a small fragment as well as the large Beit Şafafa group, are all of local manufacture. They — together with other examples discovered here and in Lebanon — enable us to give a summary of their approximate dates.

The christogram made its appearance in the first half of the fourth century, superimposed on pagan lead coffins at a Sidonian workshop, which also catered to Jewish customers for whom Jewish emblems were superimposed instead. Its use continued well into the second half of that century, when we encounter it on a locally made coffin in Jerusalem (above, p. 138, n. 86). Here it appears on a bare background without either pagan or neutral decoration, applied together with the simple cross.

Our fragment with the monogrammatic cross very likely formed part of a coffin showing Greek crosses on its lid; the date suggested would be the late fourth or early fifth centuries, and it was probably made in southern Palestine. Latin crosses only appear upon the Beit Şafafa coffins, which should be dated to the second half of the fifth century. A final type of such Christian lead coffins is represented by two locally manufactured specimens from Beersheba, showing an abundance of simple, large and small crosses and rosettes, displayed somewhat anarchically within horizontal and diagonally applied cable patterns. In accordance with the associated pottery finds and with its style, it should be assigned to the late fifth or early sixth century,¹⁰⁸ presumably at the end of lead coffin manufacture in this country.

To the known Phoenician workshops of lead coffins and to those of Jerusalem and Ashkelon, we have thus added Caesarea and Beth Guvrin (Eleutheropolis). In all these Palestinian sites we have found the application of stamps originating in Phoenician workshops, at times with stamps from several different sites on a single coffin. The mode of application of these stamps, however, differs here considerably from that employed in Phoenicia proper. We thus postulate for our local workshops the

Avi-Yonah—*JHS*, Pl. III:1a–c and Avi-Yonah, Pl. LVII:6 (iv), 7 (ii) with those on Tyrian coffins: e.g. Mercklin—*Ber.* 5, Pl. 6; Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, Pl. 42:8 (lid); even *ibid.*, Pls. 45:17, 48:23 are less primitive than the ones from Ashkelon.

¹⁰⁷ See above, n. 79; for the date see also Chéhab—*Syr.* 15, p. 340, n. 2.

¹⁰⁸ The author's thanks are due to his colleague R. Cohen for permitting him to publish these details here, pending publication of his excavation of the site in Beersheba's industrial area in 1968; cf. *Hadashot Arkheologiot* 27 (1968), p. 15 (Hebrew).

use of imported Phoenician stamps, as well as of pattern-books, as suggested for the contemporary manufacture of such coffins in Britain.¹⁰⁹ Artisans coming from Phoenicia might have set up workshops in those Palestinian cities which had a population large and wealthy enough to make this worthwhile, yet were too far from the Phoenician workshops to make transport of finished coffins reasonable. One thus finds coffins made in Phoenicia only in the northern part of Palestine. Even there, only the three found at Beth She'arim show complete identity in style and display to known Sidonian coffins. Coffins found in the Tyrian region proper, however, differ in one important way from those from Palestine: when using the motif of the temple façade on a coffin's narrow side, all the Tyrian examples show it on only one side, with the other side usually displaying a spoked pattern. On the Palestinian side of the border the temple façade is usually repeated on both short sides. This fact may well point to an additional workshop functioning at some major site, perhaps at Acre, supplying customers in the north of the country. Coffins found south of the Carmel-Gilbo'a range should in any case be regarded as locally made. Permanent workshops functioned in the large cities, while smaller places with occasional needs and limited financial ability might have been served by itinerant artisans, probably of Phoenician origin, who brought along the few tools necessary — principally stamps and a pattern-book. The manufacture of such a coffin would be a fairly simple process.¹¹⁰ The raw material must have been locally available, since at this time it was much used in building, for pipes, weights, and indeed even in magic practices; moreover lead could always be obtained by melting down older items. (For a summary of workshops suggested here, see Table 1 and above, n. 3.)

Table 1: Suggested workshops, as represented by coffins in local collections.

WORKSHOPS	Dept. of Antiquities	Israel Museum	Hebrew University	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate	Flagellation Museum	Hebron Museum	Beth-She'arim Museum	TOTAL
Tyre/Acre (?)	6	-	-	-	-	-	1	7
Sidon	3	-	1	-	-	-	2	6
Caesarea	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
Jerusalem	19	5	-	-	-	1	-	25
Ashkelon	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	6
Beth Guvrin (?)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Gaza (?)	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Itinerant (?)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Christian:								
Jerusalem	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Beersheba	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
TOTAL								62

¹⁰⁹ Toynbee (above, n. 46), pp. 346–347; Toller (above, n. 49), p. 19. For a similar suggestion, concerning contemporary bone carving, see Lila Marangou: *Bone Carvings from Egypt: I. Graeco-Roman Period*, Tübingen, 1976, pp. 29–30.

¹¹⁰ Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, pp. 235–236.

It was indeed because of this availability and inexpensiveness that the upper middle class of the population found these coffins attractive: people who could not afford foreign marble or local stone sarcophagi nevertheless wanted to do better than having mere wooden or clay coffins for their deceased relatives.¹¹¹

Significance of the Decoration

The reasons for decorating coffins at all, for the choice of the elements of decoration and their possible significance or eventual beneficial influence on the deceased have all been discussed in great detail in relation to Roman sarcophagi in general.¹¹² Dealing with the much humbler lead coffins, it has been affirmed that there even common ornaments should be understood as symbols.¹¹³ Representations of deities or their emblems and of entire or partial dionysiac scenes are thought to have been applied in order to protect the deceased from evil and benefit him in the realm of death.¹¹⁴ Even simple motifs such as cables, applied all around the coffin, might have been intended to protect the deceased (cf. above, Nos. 6, 8–12, pp. 136–140). One must, however, bear in mind that this period was one of decline in the stature of the pagan gods and belief in their power; moreover, as Avi-Yonah pointed out,¹¹⁵ the artisan often applied ready-made patterns at his fancy. To this one would add that such application might even appear upside-down¹¹⁶ or partly obliterated (see above, No. 3, pp. 133–134) — scarcely the proper way to treat a sacred image or ensure its beneficial influence. To Avi-Yonah's conclusions¹¹⁷ about the application of patterns culled from metal work, *sigillata* ware, lamps, gems, sarcophagi and architectural decoration, one would add the likelihood that artisans collected such motifs in their own pattern-books, choosing those which they found suitable to a funerary context or applicable to it. In doing so, they would often change, add to or alter the motifs, at times out of misunderstanding, by a process of 'reading-in',¹¹⁸ or in order to give the image a new or local meaning (e.g. our No. 1, above, pp. 124–130).

¹¹¹ Thus Avi-Yonah, p. 152, section 4.

¹¹² The latest being H. Sichtermann: Sinngehalt, in Koch-Sichtermann, pp. 583–617.

¹¹³ Thus Müfid, cols. 435–444.

¹¹⁴ Chéhab—*Syr.* 16, pp. 67–70; see also Mouterde (above, n. 9), pp. 207–212; Avi-Yonah—*JHS*, pp. 302–304, 310.

¹¹⁵ Avi-Yonah, p. 152.

¹¹⁶ Rahmani—*At.*, pp. 80–81, n. 14; Rahmani (above, n. 102), p. 108; see also above (pp. 133–134), our No. 3.

¹¹⁷ Above, n. 115.

¹¹⁸ To examples of patterns culled from metal work may now be added those copied from Roman breastplates of the late second to early third centuries: compare Avi-Yonah, *JHS*, Pl. XII:2 and Avi-Yonah, p. 98, Fig. 5 with Garbsch (above, n. 13), Pl. 34:5, and Rahmani—*At.*, Pl. 21:1–3 with Garbsch, *ibid.*, Pl. 9:9, Fig. 5:E 6. Such copying is at times quite illogical, as when it includes an upper triangular or oval frame, which was the original neck-opening of the scale shirt: Garbsch, *ibid.*, p. 8, Figs. 1–3. The prototype's eagle above Athena-Minerva has been 'read-in' on the coffin as an owl; for such a process see an earlier example, in L.Y. Rahmani: Transformation of an Ornament, *'Atiqot* 2 (1959), pp. 188–189. See further in my forthcoming article: The Israel Museum's Roman Lead Coffins, *The Israel Museum Journal* 7 (1988).

The clients, choosing ready-made coffins or desirable motifs out of a pattern-book, would be influenced in their choice by general religious and vague superstitious notions current in their society. The wish to impress family and friends at the funeral itself, thus enhancing their social standing in the community, might also influence the appearance of a coffin, which, it would be felt, should by no means be any less elaborate than that of the neighbours.¹¹⁹ To these considerations one must add the strong and universal psychological urge to squander for the benefit of the dead,¹²⁰ evolving from a complex of feelings of guilt, love and fear concerning the departed, as well as from vague ideas that such squandering might yet in some way bestow joy, comfort and safety to the deceased, wherever they or their spirit were considered to dwell. Even so, much of the decoration might have been applied or chosen without too much thought, mainly because it pleased the eye.¹²¹

It is only with the *menorah* that we encounter a well-defined symbol of faith and nationality;¹²² with the christogram, the monogrammatic and the simple cross we are confronted with symbols of values expressed in contemporary Christian writings, intended to ward off all evil, ensure help and express faith.

ADDENDUM

The origin of the *Bestiarius* coffin, mentioned in Rahmani—*IEJ* 36, p. 246, No. 4, has meanwhile been ascertained: it comes from a third century Roman tomb at el-Makr near Acre (map ref. 163 259), excavated in November 1958 and fully reported by Pirhiya Beck to the Department at that time. There was only one lead coffin in this tomb, which also contained two clay coffins and the remains of some wooden ones. Within this coffin two small bracelet links of jet were found, a hint of possible links of the deceased's family with Roman army personnel — cf. Rahmani—*IEJ* 10, p. 146, and n. 32. The author's belated and apologetic thanks are extended to his colleague P. Beck for her permission to publish this coffin.

¹¹⁹ Pace Toynbee (above, n. 46), pp. 352–353, who concluded that such decorations were meant only for the deceased.

¹²⁰ At this period, even Jewish theological opinion conceded that destruction of property in honour of the deceased was permissible; cf. *Semaḥot* 8:5, 6, though this tendency was restrained as far as possible: *ibid.*, 9:23; cf. D. Zlotnick: *The Tractate 'Mourning'*, New Haven, 1966, pp. 17, 58, 72. Jewellery found interred with the deceased in such lead coffins is in fact often a cheap imitation, with gold leaf, paste and glass replacing heavy gold and precious stones, e.g. Avi-Yonah, p. 99, No. 13 (i); Chéhab—*Syr.* 16, Pl. 18; J. Kaplan: A Mausoleum at Kfar Giladi, *EJ* 8 (1967), p. 111, Fig. 7 (Hebrew); Rahmani—*IEJ* 10, pp. 143–144, Pls. 20:A–F, 21:A.

¹²¹ Thus Toller (above, n. 49), p. 19. One does sometimes encounter more personal indications of grief, expressed by the spontaneous deposition of a mourner's own adornments or possessions on the coffin; see Rahmani—*At.*, pp. 79, 83–84.

¹²² The further symbolic values of this and the accompanying Jewish emblems, beyond those of identification with the Jewish people and the land of Israel (cf. Avigad, pp. 268–274) are less clear. See some recent studies — A.M. Goldberg: Der siebenarmige Leuchter, zur Entstehung eines jüdischen Bekenntnissymbols, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 117 (1967), pp. 232–247; L.Y. Rahmani: Depictions of Menorot on Ossuaries, *Qadmoniot* 13 (1980), pp. 114–117 (Hebrew); D. Barag: The *Menorah* in the Roman and Byzantine Periods, A Messianic Symbol, *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society*, 1985/6, pp. 44–49. At times, magical properties seem to have been ascribed by Jews to the *menorah*, e.g. when applying it to lead coffins in groups of three (see above, n. 84) or within a coffin (see above, n. 81).

PLATE 10



A: The Netanya Coffin.



B: The Netanya Coffin: Panel A.



C: The Netanya Coffin: Panel B.



D: The Netanya Coffin: Panels C (left) and D (right).

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL



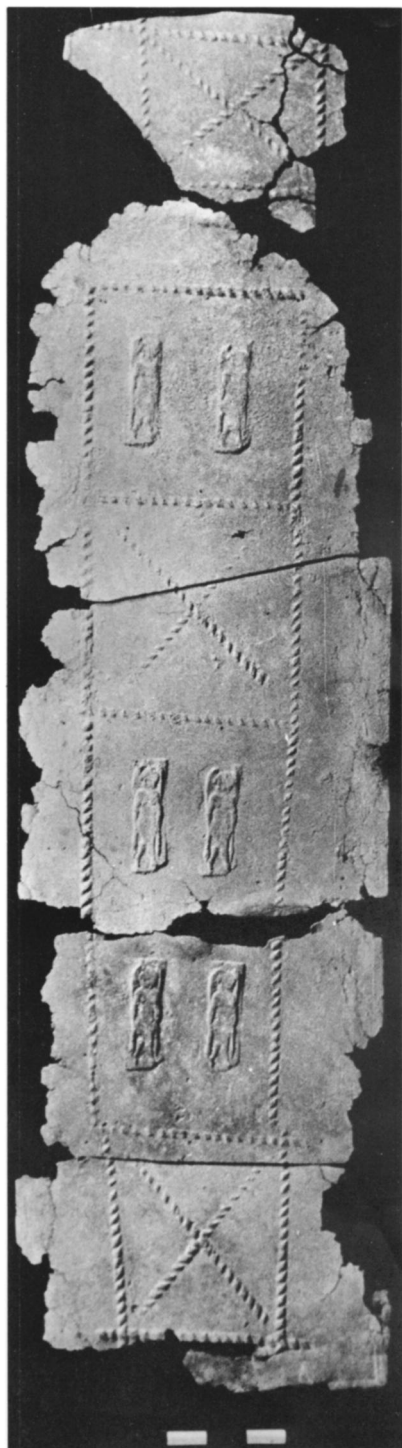
A: The 'Funerary Eros' Coffin: long side.



B: The 'Funerary Eros' Coffin: second long side, with part of the base.

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL

PLATE 12



A: The 'Funerary Eros' Coffin: the lid.



B: The 'Funerary Eros' Coffin:
Panel C.

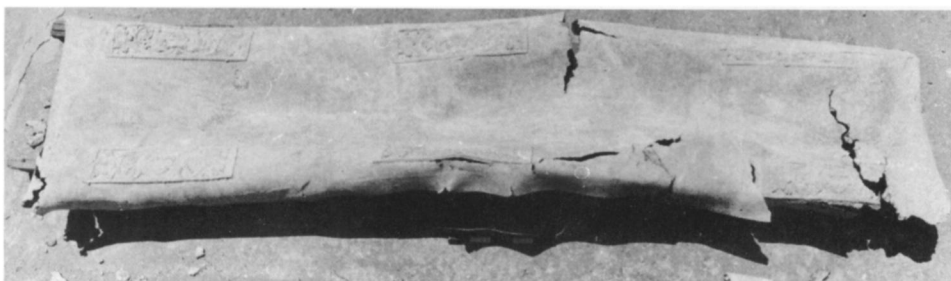
MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL



A: The Ashdod Coffin.



B: The Ashdod Coffin: short side.



C: The Ashdod Coffin: the lid.

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL

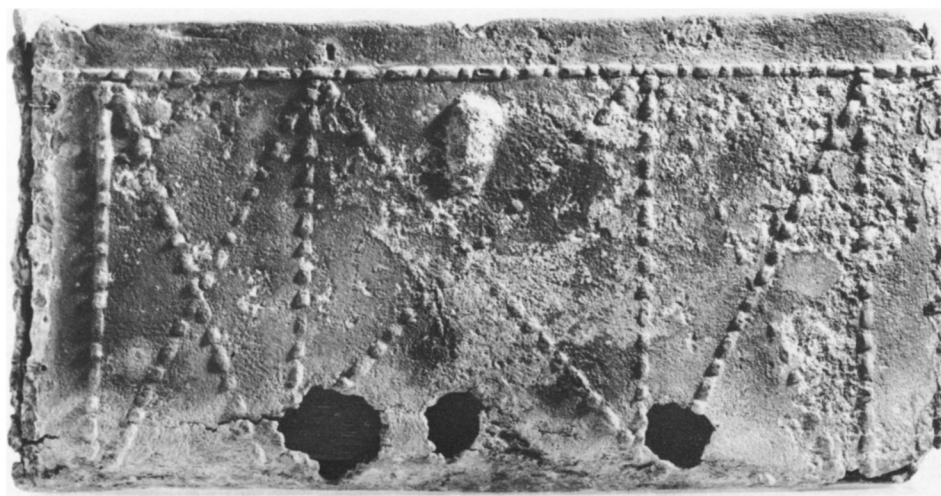
PLATE 14



A: The Ashdod Coffin: Panel A.



B: The Ashkelon Fragment.



C: The Infant's Coffin: long side.

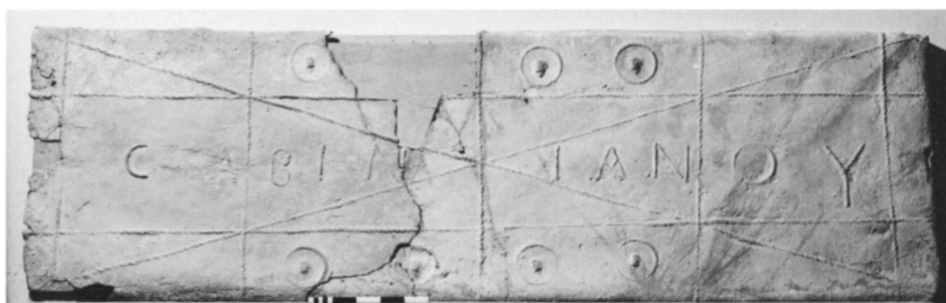
MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL



A: The Infant's Coffin: short side. .



B: The Infant's Coffin: Panel A.



C: The Beitin Lid.



D: The Beitin Lid: Panel A.



E: The Monogrammatic Cross Fragment.

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL

PLATE 16



A: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 8.



B: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 9.



C: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 10.

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL



A: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 11: long side.



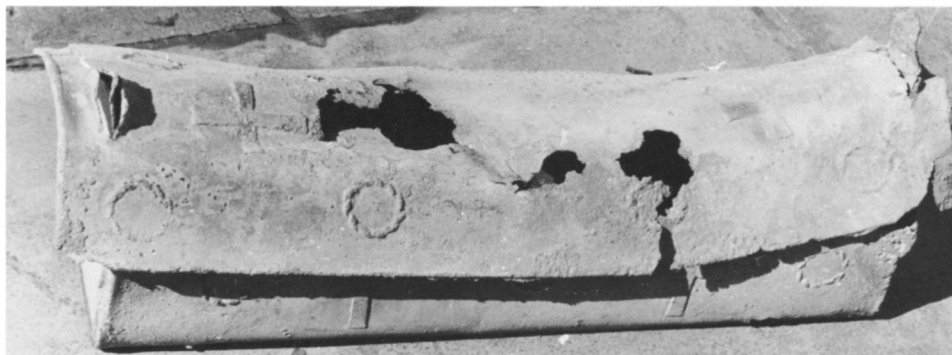
B: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 11: short side.



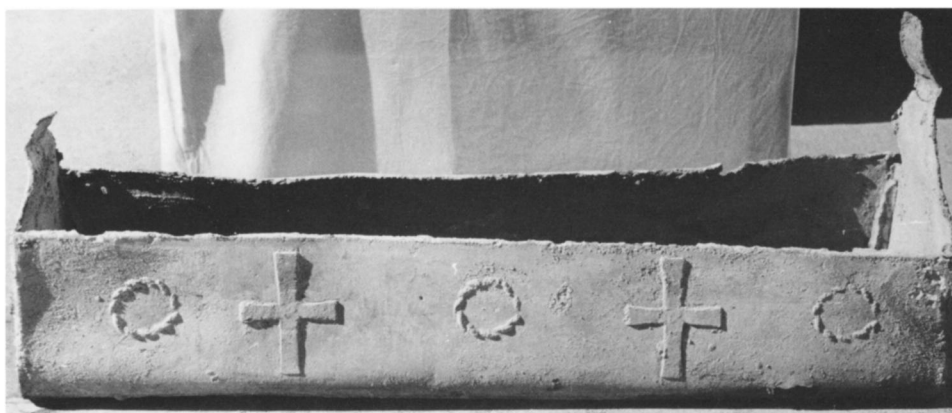
C: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 12.

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL

PLATE 18



A: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 13.



B: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 13, with lid removed.



C: Beit Şafafa Coffin No. 13: short side.

MORE LEAD COFFINS FROM ISRAEL