

HERODIUM

Final Reports of the 1972–2010 Excavations
Directed by Ehud Netzer

Volume I

Herod's Tomb Precinct

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CHAPTER 7

HUMAN BONES

FROM THE AREA OF THE MAUSOLEUM

Anna Belfer-Cohen, Baruch Arensburg, Alon Barash, and Raheli Sarig

The human remains found during the archaeological excavations at the site of Herodium are very fragmentary and, consequently, their study is problematic and the results provide only a minimum of information. On the basis of the situation in which the various bones were found during the excavations, we have treated the obtained bone sample as a whole, while enumerating the findings from the different loci below. The minimum number of individuals identified is four: two adults, one child, and one infant. The best preserved are the teeth which indicate a minimum number of four individuals presented together in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: List of recovered teeth and their number

Teeth	Number
Upper molar (?)	1
Canine (?)	1
Left upper first incisor	2
Left upper second incisor	2
Left upper canine	3
Left upper first premolar	3
Left upper second premolar	2
Left upper first molar	4
Left upper second molar	2
Left upper third (?) molar	3
Left lower second incisor	1
Left lower first premolar	1
Left lower second premolar	1
Left lower second molar	2

Teeth	Number
Left lower third molar	1
Right upper first incisor	1
Right upper second incisor	1
Right upper canine	1
Right upper first premolar	1
Right upper second premolar	1
Right upper first molar	1
Right lower second incisor	1
Right lower canine	1
Right lower first premolar	1
Right lower first molar	2
Right lower second molar	1
Right lower second molar	1

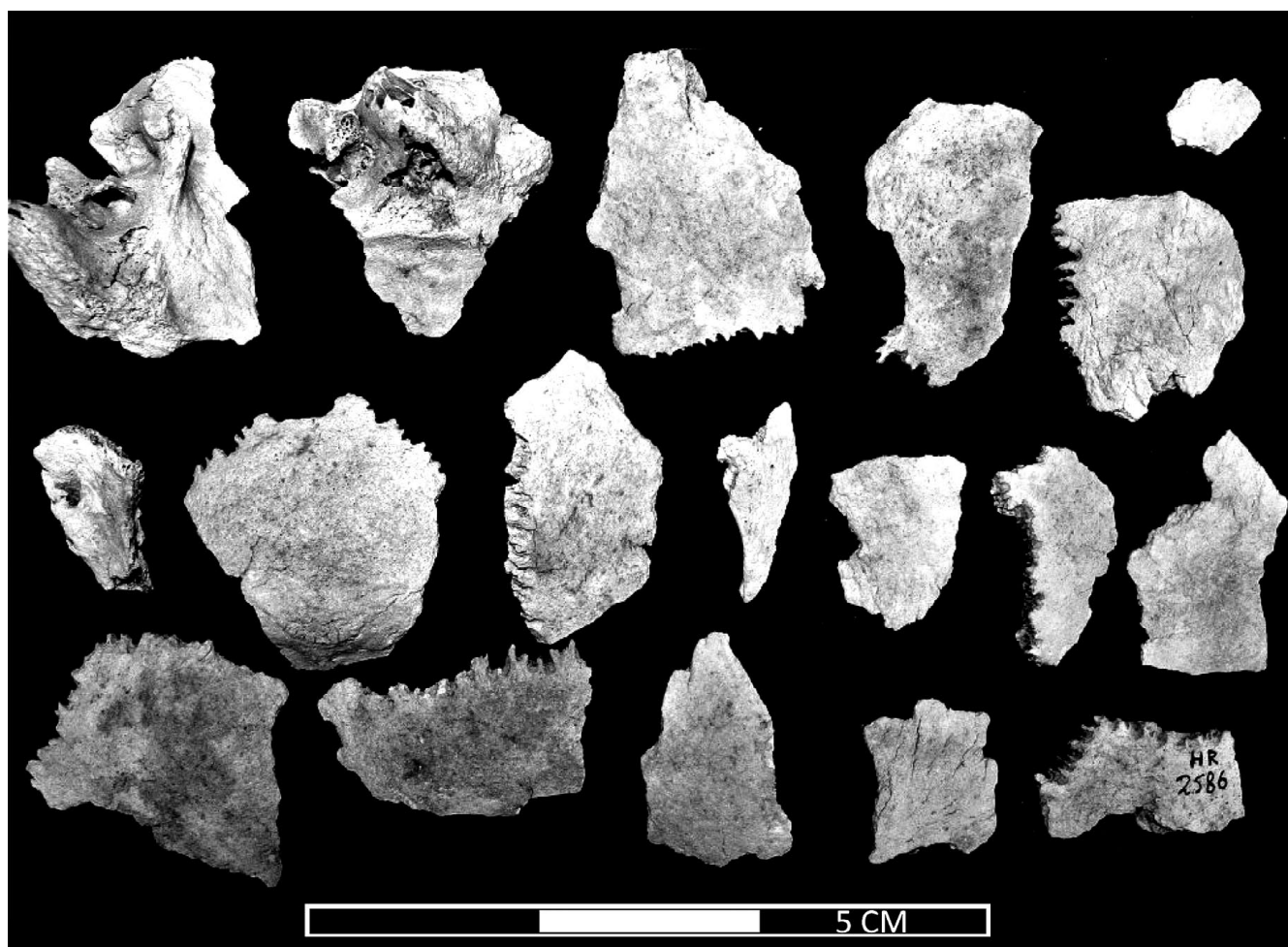
The division according to loci reveals the following:

L.A2586-5155

The bones in this locus most probably belong to a young female (Ill. 7.1). The finds comprise:

- Skull fragments
- Thoracic vertebra

- A canine tooth?
- Left upper first premolar
- Left upper second premolar
- Left upper first molar
- Left upper second molar
- Left upper third (?) molar
- Left lower third molar



III. 7.1. Fragments of skull of a young female.

L.A2624-5320

Here too, the only indicative bone is of an adult female (>21 years old, *c.* 159 cm in height). The finds comprise:

- Left humerus lacking its proximal head
- Fragment of clavicle
- Small fragments of ribs and foot bones
- Right lower second incisor
- Right lower first molar
- Left upper third (?) molar

L.A2629-5297

The remains represent at least two individuals, an adult female and probably an adult male, on the basis of the teeth and the female cervical vertebra. The finds comprise:

- Cervical vertebra
- Five (?) metacarpals
- Three small fragments of skull

- Fragments of ribs
- Fragments of femur
- Fragments of metatarsals
- Left lower second premolar
- Left upper canine
- Left upper first premolar
- Right lower canine
- Right lower second molar

L.A2754-6111

The remains represent an adult, probably a male, and an infant, but there is also a single tooth of yet another adult. The finds comprise:

- Distal right femoral epiphysis and segments of the head and diaphysis (adult)
- Left patella (adult)
- Phalanges and left metatarsal (adult)
- Diaphysis of various long bones (infant)
- Fragment of pelvis (infant) (6-12 months old)

- Cranial fragments
- Left fragment of maxilla (adult) with three teeth *in situ*:
 - Left upper second premolar
 - Left upper first molar
 - Left upper second molar
- Left upper first incisor
- Right upper first incisor
- Left upper second incisor
- Right upper canine
- Left upper canine
- Left upper first premolar
- Right upper first premolar
- Right upper second premolar
- Left upper third molar
- Right lower first premolar
- Left upper first molar

L.A2777–6202

The remains represent an adult of unknown sex. The finds comprise:

- Two small fragments of an adult skull

L.A2838–6379

The remains represent an adult of unknown sex. The finds comprise:

- Very small fragments of an adult human skull

L.A2843–6384

The remains represent an adult individual(s?) and a child, *c.* nine years old. The finds comprise:

- Very small fragments of a possible human lower limb
- Fragments of child skull
- Four teeth:
 - Right upper first molar
 - Left upper first molar
 - Left lower second molar
 - Right lower second molar (nine-year-old child)

L.A2599–5214

The finds comprise:

- Metacarpal
- Left upper canine
- Small fragments of unidentifiable human teeth

L.A2605–5269

The finds comprise:

- Fragments of adult patella, fibula, pelvis, talus, vertebra

- Left lower first premolar
- Right lower first molar
- Left lower second molar
- Upper molar?

L.A2607–5233

The finds comprise:

- Fragment of left humerus of an adult
- Unidentified fragments of long bones

L.A2780–6209

The finds comprise:

- Proximal fragment of 5th right metacarpal (adult)
- Fragment of rib (human?)
- Fragment of tibia diaphysis
- Left upper second incisor
- Very small fragments of bone

L.A2866–6441

The finds comprise:

- Left lower second incisor

L.A2869–6431

The finds comprise:

- Left upper first incisor
- Right upper second incisor

If indeed there was an admixture of the bones from all three sarcophagi after they were smashed, then all the bones together indicate the presence of one young adult female, one adult male, a child, and an infant. Most of the indicative bones which made possible the identification of these individuals derive from the loci associated directly with the red sarcophagus (Loci A2586, A2624, A2629, A2754, A2838, A2843, A2599, and A2605). However, the fact that the mausoleum, as well as the three sarcophagi, had been thoroughly destroyed during the First Jewish Revolt, and the data revealed in the area, *i.e.*, that it had witnessed battle between the Romans and the rebels, raise the possibility that some of the bone remains might have belonged to fallen rebels. (As a matter of fact, the same can be said with regard to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt.)

Unfortunately, due to the poor preservation of the bones, they underwent further deterioration while being studied in the laboratories, and the above-presented information is thus all that we were able to assess from repeated studies of the skeletal material.