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The Caves in the Cliff Shelters of Keziv Stream (Nahal Keziv) and the Relief of 'The Man in the Wall'

Introduction

Nahal Keziv is the largest Galilean river west of the watershed line. It arises on Mount Meron and flows about 35 km toward the Mediterranean. Its headwaters receive approximately 1,000 mm of rain each year and its main valley, which is near Ma'alot, is characterized by precipitous slopes and an abundance of natural caves. A number of springs arise in Nahal Keziv, the principle one being 'Ein Ziv, which has an output of about 600 m² per hour. Further downstream to the west is a large, prominent cliff charted on maps as Mount Ziv. Extending along the entire length of the cliff, which is over 150 m high, are dozens of natural caves, most of which had once been adapted for human habitation and contain a variety of archaeological remains. Many similar caves are visible on the opposite bank of the river (Fig. 1). Nahal Keziv encompasses over 300 caves, half of which are only accessible by rope. The site of Achziv (Ἐκδιππα - Ekdippa), known to have once been a major town in the region, lies south of the stream's Mediterranean estuary. Excavations there have uncovered many finds from the Iron Age, as well as from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods. Achziv lies on the ancient route between Phoenicia and the Land of Israel. Josephus Flavius mentions Achziv as the coastal town visited by Herod's brother Phasael, after the latter was warned by its inhabitants of a Parthian conspiracy to ambush him.¹ In the Rabbinic literature Achziv is also referred to as marking the boundary of the observance of religious commandments incumbent upon the people of the Land of Israel.² Religious sages were divided as to whether or not Achziv was on the border of those territories where such commandments were binding;³ and they also visited the place in order to resolve *Halakhic* issues. Excavations at Tel a-Ziv

¹ Jos. Ant. XIV.343; War I.257.

² Mishnah, *Shevi'ith* VI.1.

³ See Tosefta, *Oholoth* XVIII.14.

have revealed public buildings from the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁴ It is quite possible that, although it is at least 10 km distant from the Nahal Keziv cave system, the Jewish inhabitants of the town of Achziv or other settlements near its plentiful water supplies – such as Mifshata where the priestly family of Harim settled, or *Katzra de-Galila* recorded by the sages in the *Beraita de-Tehumin* (“Tannaic List of Boundaries”) and identified as Horvat Galil – fled to the shelter of the cliff caves in Nahal Keziv during the Early Roman period and the First Jewish Revolt.⁵

Three archaeological discoveries have long been known in the centre of the western Galilee’s forested mountain ridge on the northern border of Eretz Israel:

A. An almost square compound, 8.40 × 9.30 m,⁶ the so-called “Burj Misr”, “Burj Musr”, “Bordj Maser”, “Bordj Maaser” or “Abirim Fortress” (“Mezad Abirim”), constructed of large, unhewn stones in its lower courses and ashlar in its upper courses, built using the dry masonry method (Figs. 2-5).⁷ The preserved height of its walls is 1-3 m, except for its south-western corner, which is preserved to a height of 4.40 m. The compound has a low entrance in its western wall, ca. 1.20 m high, with two door jambs (the southern jamb has a square socket for a bolt) and a lintel that had been carefully dressed, similar to those in burial chambers, such as at the Beth She’arim necropolis. No means of access have been discovered leading to it through the rocky area. Since it has not yet been studied in-depth or excavated, the compound’s role is unclear, perhaps a fortress/stronghold, also used as an observation tower, or a mausoleum. The latter would seem to be more reasonable, taking into consideration the low entrance of the compound (Fig. 5). Based on the shape of the stone-cutting in its upper courses – four borders with a central boss – and the carved vertical line at each of its four corners (Figs. 2-4), it seems plausible to attribute it to the Hellenistic period, namely from the last quarter of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd century BCE onwards,⁸ although it might also have been in use in later periods.

⁴ See Prausnitz 1992: 28.

⁵ See Shivtiel 2014: 100-102 (with references).

⁶ We are grateful to Kalil Adar and Guy Dekel, from Abirim communal village, western Galilee, who measured the compound on April 2016.

⁷ See Guérin 1880: 69; Conder and Kitchener 1881: 167; Frankel *et alii* 2001: 29 (No. 212). Aviam and Shalem (2008: online) attribute the compound to a mausoleum of the Roman or early Byzantine period. On March 25, 2016, the authors paid a visit to the compound to examine its construction characteristics and to photograph the site.

⁸ A similar dressing and carving style can be found at Late Classical and Hellenistic sites, such as in Asia Minor: Assos (Serdaroglu 1995: Fig. 2 [on p. 25], Fig. 2 [on p. 26]; Uluarslan n.d.: 12), Larisa (Bean 1967: Pl. 23), Perge (Özgür 1989: Figs. 24, 30), Priene (Bean 1967: Pl. 52; Charbonneau *et alii* 1972: Ills. 74, 86; Rumscheid 1998: Figs. 88, 93, 192); Greece: Aegosthena (Charbonneau *et alii* 1972: Ill. 84), Dodona (Charbonneau *et alii* 1973: Ill. 13), Eleutheræ (Charbonneau *et alii* 1972: Ill. 82), the Island of Rhodes – the acropolis of Lindos and that of the city of Rhodes (personal observation during a visit to Rhodes in May 2016.- AO); Albania:

B. A group of 18 natural caves dispersed along a steep rock face extending beyond the cliff (see below) (Figs. 8-9), where the sunken relief, discussed below, is carved (Figs. 10-12). The caves were explored during two surveys conducted along the entire length of Nahal Keziv: one in the 1980s (see below) and the other, involving rappelling down the rock, by Y. Shvitzel and V. Boslov in 2009.

C. A sunken relief of a male figure (see below) (Figs. 10-12), engraved on a rough rock surface, about 2 km as the crow flies from the square compound to the west.⁹ There is no evidence to suggest any connection between the Hellenistic square compound and the sunken relief. An ancient windy constructed road (north-west) (Figs. 6-7), preserved along *ca.* 10 m, revetted and retained on its southern-sloping side by large stones, leads to the sunken relief and the adjacent complex of the 18 caves.

The Complex of the Caves

The so-called "The Temple Cave" or "El-Jalila Cave" ("The Sacred Cave") is the main cave in the cliff of the cluster of 18 karstic caves (see below) and also the largest of the Nahal Keziv caves (Figs. 14-15). Its huge, wide entrance (height – 2 m, width – 10 m) is south-facing and located at the base of the cliff. It leads to a central cavern measuring 11 × 23 m and reaching a height of 5.50 m. The floor is leveled and tamped with only a few stones and the roof is blackened with soot. At the back of the cavern are two rock boulders (Fig. 15) measuring up to 2 m high. Stalactites are visible inside, some of which are still dripping, concentrated near the front of the cave. Between the two boulders at the back of the cave is a very low inner continuation of the cave that has not yet been explored. The 18 caves were apparently inhabited in the Roman period, based on various finds inside them, especially pottery sherds.

On the left side of the entrance to the cave ("The Temple Cave") there is a smoothed semicircular niche (Fig. 16), hewn out of the rock, *ca.* 80 cm high. Despite the fact that no evidence was found within the cave, to indicate its sacred character, its size and proximity to the sunken relief (see below), together with the semicircular niche, suggest that it may once have had a sacred role, as a cultic site for a particular deity (nowadays, the cave is used as a shelter for shepherds and their flocks).

Apollonia (Ceka 2008: front cover, Figs. 13, 37), Byllis (Ceka and Mucaj 2012: Fig. 24), Buthrotum (Ceka 2006: Fig. 57) and others.

⁹ In November and December 2015, the authors made a number of field trips to the site to examine and photograph the relief. We would like to thank Kalil Adar for his assistance and for the photographic documentation.

The cluster of 18 caves, known as “The Temple Cave” complex, is unique among the entire network of cliff shelters in Nahal Keziv, surveyed and explored by Y. Shivtiel, the co-author of this article, and V. Boslov from the Israeli Caves Research (Figs. 8-9).¹⁰ “The Temple Cave” and its adjacent caves (map ref. 175317/272013) are located on the northern bank of the stream. The entire complex is concentrated within an impressive cliff facing opposite Hanesharim (vultures) cliff.¹¹ It measures approximately 60 m long and 17 m high and is located in the upper third of the cliff face. The cliff became renowned for the discovery there of a figure carved in relief and named “The Man in the Wall”. The caves here can be divided into two groups: eight caves to the west of “The Temple Cave” and ten caves to its east. Fifteen of the 18 caves are only accessible using rappelling techniques. We believe that this was probably the only way of reaching them in Antiquity too.¹²

The Cave Complex West of “The Temple Cave” (Figs. 8-9)

This part of the complex comprises nine caves (Nos. 1-9). Two lead from the back wall of an open rock shelf and contain pottery and rock-cutting marks. One of these has a rectangular opening cut into the wall, leading to another cave, where a square water cistern has been hewn directly beneath a group of stalactites that are still dripping. Another cave was found above these two caves, with a stone wall built at its entrance; and one more cave was discovered on the same

¹⁰ See Shivtiel, forthcoming.

¹¹ The survey, exploration and study of all the caves in Nahal Keziv were carried out by Yinon Shivtiel, the co-author of this article, within the framework of his doctoral thesis. He noted that the caves in the precipitous cliffs of Nahal Keziv are concentrated along the section of river charted as Mount Ziv on maps. This cliff top and all the caves in it are on the southern bank of Nahal Keziv, opposite the large rock face where the male relief figure is carved. The pottery found in the caves shows evidence of human occupation from the Hellenistic to the Middle Roman period. The caves are only accessible using ropes, leading Y. Shivtiel to suggest their similarity to cliff shelters discovered in the eastern Galilee that were widely used by Jews during the First Revolt (see Shivtiel 2014: 54-103). Some caves in the complex may have been occupied by Jews who fled there to seek refuge. Cliff shelters used by Jews and accessed and adapted for habitation in an identical manner have long been known in the eastern Galilee. It is highly possible that Jews living in the western Galilee sought refuge during the Early and Middle Roman periods, even if they were a minority among the pagan population there (see Frankel and Getzov 1997: 19-23; Safrai 1981: 278-285; Klein 1945: 128-142; Neaman 1978: 15-37; Sussmann 1981: 205-249). As observed by Y. Shivtiel, the finds in this cave complex include a built/rock-hewn and plastered water cisterns and Early to Late Roman sherds, all of which provide conclusive evidence of human habitation in this cluster of caves. There is good reason to attribute the sunken relief figure to the caves’ inhabitants, and it probably had a religious/cultic purpose (see below). This interpretation is just one of a number of theories, none of which can be ruled out, including that previously suggested by Y. Shivtiel, the co-author of this article.

¹² For some of the ways in which cliff caves were reached in ancient times, see Jos. *War* I.305-313.

contour line, accessible by climbing up the sheer cliff face from the cave below. The remaining four caves, located in the same western section, comprise caves that had been adapted for habitation and contained pottery finds.

The Cave Complex East of "The Temple Cave" (Figs. 8-9)

Eight caves are spread along this section of cliff (Nos. 10-17). One is high above the eastern entrance to "The Temple Cave" and can be reached by climbing through an adjoining cave. Its roof is blackened with soot and numerous potsherds are strewn across its floor, most of them from the Middle Roman period. A shaft cut into its upper part provides light from the cave above it. A particularly large cave shaped like a rectangular hall (6 × 7 m) acts as an entrance chamber to two rock-hewn chambers cut into its eastern wall. This large cave has a rectangular opening in the cliff, measuring 0.70 × 1.30 m, with marks where the rock had been cut. The cave features small stalactites, some still dripping, and flowstones. It contained a large number of potsherds, some of them thick and coarse, as well as pottery from the Hellenistic, Early and Middle Roman periods. A large opening in the cave roof, 1.60 × 1.90 m, leads to another cave. The latter cave has a 2 m high entrance in the cliff face. At the back of this cave is a narrow passage leading to yet another chamber containing stalactites and flowstones. Like the previous cave, it too yielded pottery from the Early Roman period and perhaps even earlier. A final series of three chambers is situated in the furthest corner of the cliff and can only be reached using advanced rappelling techniques due to the negative slope of the rock face.

The Sunken Relief (Figs. 10-12)

During the archaeological survey in the western Galilee, carried out by R. Frankel and N. Getzov at the beginning of the 1980s on behalf of the The Association of Israel Archaeological Survey, a sunken relief, *ca.* 1.78 m high, engraved on a rough rock surface, was discovered on the northern bank of Keziv Stream (Nahal Keziv).¹³ The relief is approximately 25 m east of the large main cave, located among the complex of the 18 caves noted above. It represents a male figure of military nature, the so-called "The Man in the Wall", probably portraying a distinguished or revered personality.

¹³ Frankel 1986: 51-52. The relief was discovered in March 1985 by the late S. Be'er, a member of the then survey team.

Above the figure in question, on a relatively smooth surface, is the shape of a rectangular frame (Fig. 13), most probably intended for an inscription.

The scientific approach to the relief to date has been general and insufficient, lacking discussion and analysis of its iconographic characteristics and significance. The following suggestions have been posited for its identification: a) an image representing a Phoenician deity, although it has been noted that this image as such does not exist in the Phoenician region;¹⁴ b) resemblance to the trumpet player in the mural of the animal frieze (the chase) in the Sidonian Tomb (I) and to the flute player in the wall painting of the musicians in Tomb II of the Hellenistic period at Marissa (Maresha) (2nd century BCE);¹⁵ c) a human-size relief of a god/governor/hero figure with a long sword, although the posture of the figure with a raised right hand, which presumably grasped a *hasta* (spear), may hint at a Roman tradition;¹⁶ d) an Hellenistic divinity.¹⁷

The relief is coarse and its artistic quality is rather poor, probably due to the difficult conditions with which the artist/artisan had to contend while engraving it on the uneven surface of the rock. Although the figure lacks charm and softness, the artist/artisan has given it a monumental and vigorous appearance, expressing power, authority and decisiveness. The face and body of the figure have a west-facing orientation. The head and the lower part of the body are depicted in profile, while the upper part (chest) is rendered frontally. The figure appears barefoot and is seemingly in a walking position, since the right foot is placed on the ground, while the left one has a slightly elevated heel.¹⁸ The beardless figure has a relatively large squarish head, a long sloping nose, a slightly open mouth, thin lips, and a thickened and protruding chin, but is devoid of any personal facial characteristics. It is impossible to identify it with a specific human image, king or emperor, in comparison with other artistic media, like coins and sculpture, which provide identification by means of facial features.

Five iconographic characteristics are discernible in the figure:

1. The attire, consisting of a *chiton* and an *himation* or *chlamys*;¹⁹
2. The gesture of the raised right hand;

¹⁴ Frankel 1986: 51-52.

¹⁵ Tal 2007: 219; see also Peters and Thiersch 1905: Pls. VI, XVI.

¹⁶ Stiebel 2007: 107.

¹⁷ M. Aviam's opinion, conveyed both orally and in written form to Y. Shvitiel in December 2015 and February 2016, respectively. We would like to thank M. Aviam, who provided us with this information.

¹⁸ Cf., for example, the votive relief from Eleusis (ca. 440 BCE) of Demeter, Persephone and Triptolemos, now in the National Museum at Athens, and the stele of Kriton and Timariste (ca. 440-420 BCE), now in the Museum in Rhodes (see Richter 1967: Figs. 168, 169 [on p. 118], respectively).

¹⁹ See below, nn. 20, 22.

3. The radiate (solar) crown;
4. The walking posture;
5. The beardless face.

The *chiton*,²⁰ a typical garment and characteristic attribute of Sol/Sol *Invictus*,²¹ features in its lower part six vertical, schematic and coarse folds; its upper part seems to be folded over around the waist to hold the garment in place, a form known in Classical Greek dress as *apoptygma* (ἀπόπτυγμα). The *chiton* appears to have short sleeves, as seen on the right arm. An *himation* or *chlamys* is depicted above the *chiton*, fastened with a *fibula* and hanging down behind the figure, covering the left shoulder and upper arm. Its train passes beneath the left arm-pit and is wrapped around the figure's left arm and forearm. A thick folded fabric, carved on the chest area over the *chiton*, creates a clear distinction between the two articles of clothing, the *himation/chlamys* and *chiton*. The *himation* (cloak), in our case, is in the form of a *chlamys*, both of which are characteristic garments and attributes of Sol/Sol *Invictus*.²² Two or three fingers of the left hand of the figure are discernible, apparently hold the handle of a dagger, placed horizontally above the *apoptygma*, while the forearm is represented above a long sword which is decorated on its upper part with two pompons.

The right hand of the figure is raised above the shoulder, parallel to the face; the elbow is bent at approx. 90° and the forearm is held demonstratively and authoritatively upright, with the open(?) palm, facing inwards, at about the same height as the head.²³ The meaning of this gesture has been much debated.²⁴ It is widely accepted that the raised right hand gradually became a characteristic and powerful gesture of Sol/Sol *Invictus*, seemingly signifying the link between the god's image and the viewer.²⁵ The development of this gesture took place over the course of the 2nd century CE, and became increasingly common, as one of this god's standard gestures, in the later imperial

²⁰ See Hijmans 2009: 72 and n. 8, 74; Steyn 2012-13: 13. In the Roman mosaic pavement of Phaedra and Hippolytos, found at Antioch, the latter wears a *chiton*, with an overfold at the waist (*apoptygma* - ἀπόπτυγμα) and a *chlamys* or *himation* held on his left shoulder with a *fibula*, as in our case (see Cimok 2000: 77).

²¹ For the epithet *invictus* for Sol, see Berrens 2004: 184-198; Hijmans 2009: 18-27. For a review of the theories on the origin, character and significance of *Sol Invictus*, see Hijmans 1996: 115-150. For the representation of Helios/Sol and Emperor in Roman art, as a symbol of victorious royalty and that of apotheosis, as well as for the representation of Emperor/Sol, see *LIMC* IV/1: 619-622.

²² See Hijmans 2009: 74; Bardill 2012: 52.

²³ Cf. Matern 2002: 134-136.

²⁴ Matern (2002: 129-147) discusses extensively the significance of the raised right hand of *Sol Invictus*, with references to previous studies.

²⁵ On this gesture, see Cumont 1923: 69-72; L'Orange 1935: 93-94; Matern 2002: 129-147; Hijmans 1996: 124-125; Hijmans 2009: 73-74, 90-96.

period, that is, in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.²⁶ The god is usually depicted with this gesture in Roman art²⁷ whenever he is represented as a walking full-length figure, as in the case discussed here.

The radiate crown adorning the head of the figure was a common attribute on Roman coinage, worn by both Sol and the emperor,²⁸ despite the slight differences between them.²⁹ In the discussed relief, the radiate crown is depicted without a fillet and *lemnisci* (ribbons) at the back of the head,³⁰ and thus it seems to be a solar attribute worn by Sol.³¹ It is unclear whether Sol's radiate crown could be removed, for in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Latinus has "twelve golden rays circling his gleaming brows, emblem of his ancestral Sun" (... *cui tempora circum aurati bis sex radii fulgentia cingunt, Solis avi specimen*);³² On the other hand, Roman emperors, as evinced by numismatics³³ wore a radiate crown attached

²⁶ See Hijmans 2009: 90, 92. L'Orange (1935: 93-94) considered that this gesture enabled the viewers to differentiate *Sol Invictus*, the new, oriental (Syrian) sun-god, from *Sol Indiges*, the old Roman sun-god. Cf. also Matern 2002: 134-136; Steyn 2012-13: 6, 9-10.

²⁷ On this gesture in various artistic media of Roman art, see *LIMC* IV/2: Nos. 27, 93, 97, 101, 105-106, 116, 118-119, 160, 172, 203, 230, 233, 290, 414-415. In addition, *Sol Invictus* appears thus in a wooden fragmentary Roman zodiac (3rd century CE?) from Caesarea Maritima (Ovadiah and Mucznik 1996: 375-380) and in the zodiac of the synagogue mosaic pavement at Hammath Tiberias (mid-4th century CE) (Ovadiah and Ovadiah 1987: Pls. LXVI-LXVII[1], CLXXX-CLXXXI). The gesture of outstretched hand is also typical of the Roman emperor in many equestrian statues, expressing power, sovereignty, authority, blessing or salutation (see, for instance, that of Marcus Aurelius in Piazza di Campidoglio, Rome: Hanfmann n.d.: Colour Plate III [on p. 39]; Kleiner 1992: Fig. 236 [on p. 272]).

²⁸ See below, nn. 30, 33, 45.

²⁹ See Hijmans 2009: 82-84, 515-521; see also Hijmans 2006: 440-443.

³⁰ On the representation of *Sol/Sol Invictus* in this manner on Roman coinage, see Hijmans 2009: 412-416, 418, 421, 430-431, 433-434, 438, 442, 444, 446-454.

³¹ Cf. Hijmans 2009: 515-516.

³² See Virgil, *Aeneid* XII.162-164; cf. also Ovid, *Met.* II.40-41: *at genitor circum caput omne micantes deposuit radios, ...* (and his father put off his glittering crown of light, ...).

³³ For the depiction of the emperor with radiate crown on Roman coinage, see Carson 1962: Pls. 1-47 (*passim* – from Severus Alexander to Balbinus and Pupienus); Carson 1990: Pls. 4 (48 – Nero), 9 (119 – Vespasian), 11 (144 – Trajan), 18 (254, 256 – Caracalla), 19 (263 – Elagabalus), 21 (297 – Balbinus, 298 – Pupienus, 299-300, 303 – Gordian III), 22 (304-305 – Gordian III, 308, 310, 312-313 – Philip I, 309 – Philip II), 23 (316 – Pacatian, 317 – Jotapian, 318, 321, 323 – Trajan Decius, 324 – Herennius Etruscus, 326 – Divus Vespasian, 327-328 – Hostilian, 329 – Trebonianus Gallus), 24 (330-333 – Volusian, 334 – Galus, 335-336, 338 – Aemilian, 341- Valerian I, 344 – Valerian II), 25 (345, 349, 354, 358 – Gallienus, 346, 348, 351, 355-356 – Valerian I, 350 – Divus Valerian II, 359 – Saloninus), 26 (364-365 – Macrian, 366 – Regalian, 369, 372, 374 – Gallienus), 27 (376-377, 379-384, 386 – Gallienus), 28 (392-396 – Claudius II, 398-401 – Quintillus, 402-404 – Divus Claudius, 408 – Postumus), 29 (410-412, 414 – Postumus, 416 – Laelian, 418-419 – Marius, 421-422, 424-425 – Victorinus), 30 (431 – Tetricus I, 432-433 – Tetricus II, 435-437, 441-442, 444-446 – Aurelian), 31 (447-448, 450-453, 455-457 – Aurelian, 459 – Vabalthus), 32 (463-464 – Aurelian, 467-468, 470, 472-478 – Tacitus), 33 (479, 481-483 – Florian, 486, 491, 493-494 – Probus), 34 (498, 501 – Probus, 504-505 – Carus, 507 – Carinus), 35 (511, 517 – Divus Carus, 512 – Divus Nigrinian, 516 – Carus and Carinus, 520 – Numerian, 523 – Julian), 36 (525 – Galerius, 527, 532, 534, 538 – Maximian, 528-529, 533 – Diocletian, 530-531

to a fillet and tied at the back of the head with ribbons (*lemnisci*) that hung down the neck. Some scholars have argued that the imperial radiate crown was an actual historical object and not a solar attribute with symbolic or divine connotations. The fillet and ribbons tied at the back of the emperor's head suggest that this crown should be considered distinct from the radiate crown worn by Sol/*Sol Invictus*; and that it was an Augustan attribute, an honorific symbol commemorating Augustus's victory at Actium in 31 BCE,³⁴ adopted by later emperors in order to associate themselves with Augustus.

Other scholars have considered the radiate crown of the Roman emperors as a divine, solar association that indicated the link between them and Sol, inspired by Hellenistic models.³⁵ Tiberius was the first emperor to depict the radiate crown on coin portraiture, representing posthumously the deified Augustus. Living emperors too, from Nero (after 65 CE) to Constantine the Great, were depicted in this way.³⁶ In addition, two rare *aurei* show two figures, probably the youthful Geta and Caracalla, with characteristics of Sol: namely, with radiate crowns, lacking ribbons (*lemnisci*), and raised right hands.³⁷ Undoubtedly, the solar attribute and gesture depicted on these unique coins are typical of Sol, indicating the notion of imperial divinity, with the two individuals representing themselves as Sol's manifestation on earth, and their desire for divine status.³⁸ Moreover, based on epigraphic evidence, it seems plausible that *Imperator Invictus* and *Invictus*

– Constantius I), 37 (540-543, 546 – Carausius, 552-555 – Allectus), 44 (651 – Constantine I); Hijmans 2003: 382-383, n. 17; Hijmans 2009: 422, 426-430, 432-443, 446; Shotter 2011: Pls. 1.6, 1.8-1.11, 1.23; Steyn 2012-13: 54-55, Figs. 7-8, 15-20, 22-24, 26-27, 29-32, 34-36, 40-41; cf. also Cumont 1956: 99-100, 184-186; Bardill 2012: Figs. 34, 36 (p. 48), 38-39 (pp. 50-51), 41 (p. 53), 42 (p. 54), 43-44 (p. 55), 45 (p. 56), 46-47 (p. 57), 50 (p. 61). For depictions of emperors wearing the radiate crown on objects other than coins, such as sculpture, cameos and gems, see Bergmann 1998: Tafeln 21(1, 3-4), 22, 24, 45 (1), 52 (1, 6), 55 (1-3).

³⁴ See Hijmans 2009: 527, 539, 547-548; Hijmans (2009: 547-548) also claims that "What we have established, first of all, is that the imperial radiate crown is not a solar or divine symbol. The imperial radiate crown was a real object, carefully and consistently differentiated from visual conventions for symbolic or divine light. It had its own meanings and connotations unconnected with Sol. For the first fifty years of its use it was an honorary crown associated exclusively with Augustus. This realization that the depicted object was a real crown rather than a symbol of godhead would not diminish Augustus in the viewer's mind – Augustus did not need rays to be a god – but would simply add further levels of meaning to a significant image". Following this, Bardill (2012: 42) notes that "... Hijmans accepts that uninformed Roman viewers of radiate portraits on coins might intuitively have seen the crown as evoking radiance and divinity".

³⁵ Bergmann 1998: 3, 99; Hijmans 2009: 519-520; Bardill 2012: 43. In Ptolemaic Egypt, a coin of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-205 BCE) depicts his deified father Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BCE) wearing the radiate crown (see Head 1965: Pl. 34 [No. 24]; Davis and Kraay 1980: Pl. 27). The Seleucid king Antiochus VI Epiphanes Dionysus (145-142 BCE) is also depicted on a coin with the radiate crown (see Head 1965: Pl. 40 [No. 25]; Davis and Kraay 1980: Pl. 105).

³⁶ See above, n. 33.

³⁷ Williams 1999: 308; Hijmans 2009: 545; Steyn 2012-13: 56.

³⁸ On the divine status of living emperors, cf. Claus 1999.

Sol are parallel titles and interacted as *Sol Invictus Imperator*. This interaction is supported by dedicatory inscriptions, such as *D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) Imp(eratori)*, that have been found in various *Mithraea*.³⁹ Following this, it would seem that the imperial radiate crown was a symbolic, honorary, solar attribute with divine connotations, depicted as a real object for political reasons: namely, to avoid controversy over the representation of the divine solar rays in the imperial portraiture.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, this does not unequivocally mean that the emperor had become *Sol/Sol Invictus*. Perhaps the intension was for the emperor to be identified with *Sol/Sol Invictus* and be compared directly to him, revealing himself as the god's manifestation. Hence, it is probable that the emperor was perceived as a living divinity and could thus be portrayed as *Sol/Sol Invictus*,⁴¹ representing his cult⁴² and symbolizing a unifying power with divine protection, as had been associated with Augustus and his elevated status.⁴³

Sol/Sol Invictus was favoured by the Roman emperors even before Elagabalus (218-222 CE) and Aurelian (270-275 CE),⁴⁴ and his image appears frequently on imperial coins⁴⁵ and in other artistic media.⁴⁶ The god was also considered the official sun-god of the later Roman Empire, as well as a patron of soldiers, and was widely worshipped in the 3rd century CE.⁴⁷ Under Elagabalus's reign (218-222 CE), the penetration of the *Sol/Sol Invictus* cult into the western part of the empire intensified and the emperor was his *sacerdos amplissimus*.⁴⁸ Two temples were dedicated to the god and in 220 and 221 CE there was a festival held in his honour. The cult played an important role in everyday Roman life, for it was the emperor who had imposed it upon his people. It did not completely disappear after his death, but was less visible than it had been

³⁹ See Clauss 2000: 24.

⁴⁰ Bergmann 1998: 3, 112-123 and *passim*; cf. also Alföldi (1935: 139-141), who had already claimed that the rays of the Roman imperial radiate crown were symbolic rather than real, representing divine light and acquiring solar connotations in Rome; Bastien 1992: 103-116. For another view, see Hijmans 2009: 82-84, 516-521, 526-528, 533-534, 536, 539-548.

⁴¹ Cf. Hijmans 2009: 118.

⁴² Cf. Berrens 2004: 69-70.

⁴³ Cf. Hijmans 2009: 547-548.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hijmans 2003: 382-383, 385-386.

⁴⁵ See above, n. 30. Halsberghe (1972: 155) states that "Up to the conversion of Constantine the Great, the cult of *Deus Sol Invictus* received the full support of the emperors. The many coins showing the sun god that these emperors struck provide official evidence of this. The cult of *Deus Sol Invictus* completely satisfied the religious convictions of the Romans. From the end of the third century on, religious syncretism, perfectly embodied by the cult of *Deus Sol Invictus*, was the ideal of both the masses and the intellectuals"; and following, he (1972: 169) claims "that the custom of representing *Deus Sol Invictus* on coins came to an end in A.D. 323".

⁴⁶ For representations of *Sol/Sol Invictus* in other artistic media than coins, such as sculpture, mosaics, wall paintings, lamps, intaglios, cameos, etc., see Hijmans 2009: 103-411.

⁴⁷ See Halsberghe 1972: 37; Steyn 2012-13: 6. On *Sol*'s popularity during the 3rd century CE, see Hijmans 2003: 381; Steyn 2012-13: 42-43.

⁴⁸ Cf. Cumont 1956a: 114.

before. Later on, in 274 CE, the Emperor Aurelian (270-275 CE) re-established the worship of Sol/*Sol Invictus*, and elevated him to the rank of high god of the empire, naming him the divine protector of the emperors and the empire, and making his cult official, alongside the other traditional Roman cults,⁴⁹ promoting the idea that he himself, the emperor, was vice-regent of the sun-god and his representative on earth. In the same year, he also built a magnificent new temple dedicated to the god in Rome, bringing the total number of temples for Sol in Rome to (at least) four.⁵⁰ Aurelian also instituted games in honour of Sol/*Sol Invictus*, held every four years, from 274 CE onwards, in the Circus Maximus.⁵¹ Sol/*Sol Invictus* continued to be venerated and worshipped even after the conversion of Constantine the Great to Christianity, as supported by an inscription referring to Sol/*Sol Invictus*, dated to 387 CE.⁵²

We can assume that the radiate crown, at least for the 3rd-century emperors, was not only a real object but also an attribute indicating divinity, with a possible link to Augustus, representing divine light and support, bearing messages of authority, power and sovereignty.

The Emperor Julian the "Apostate" (361-363 CE), in his *Hymn to King Helios*, describes the physical qualities of the sun-god and calls him "... the King of the All, Helios, ..." (... παρὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν ὅλων Ἡλίῳ, ...) or "... Helios, the King of the All ..." (... τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν ὅλων Ἡλίῳ ... or ... τὸν βασιλέα τῶν ὅλων ... Ἡλιον, ...), etc.⁵³ W.C. Wright, the translator of Julian's work, writes in the introduction to oration IV the following: "It is Mithras the Persian sun-god, rather than Apollo, whom Julian identifies with his 'intellectual god' Helios, and Apollo plays only a minor part among his manifestations". For the Romans, he adds, the cult of Mithras "supplied the ideals of purity, devotion and self-control which the other cults had lacked. The worshippers of Mithras were taught to contend against the powers of evil, submitted themselves to a severe moral discipline, and their reward after death was to become as pure as the gods to whom they ascend". He also remarks that Iamblichus (ca. 250 - ca. 325 CE), the Syrian Neo-Platonic philosopher, "had imported into the Neo-Platonic system the intermediary world of intellectual gods (νοεροὶ θεοί). On them Helios-Mithras, their supreme god and centre, bestows the intelligence and creative and unifying forces that he has received from his transcendental counterpart among the intelligible gods".⁵⁴

Sol/*Sol Invictus* also played a prominent role in the Mithraic mysteries and

⁴⁹ Cf. Cumont 1956a: 114-115; Cumont 1963: 188; Clausen 2000: 12-13.

⁵⁰ Cumont 1963: 106; Hijmans 2009: 484-485.

⁵¹ Hijmans 2009: 485.

⁵² *CIL* VI,1778 (*pontifici soli candidato*); Halsberghe 1972: 170, n. 3.

⁵³ Julian, *Hymn to King Helios*, pp. 374-375, 408-409, 414-415, 424-425, 428-429, 432-433.

⁵⁴ See Julian, *Hymn to King Helios* (introduction to oration IV, pp. 348-349).

was equated with Mithras himself, and “although Mithraic iconography clearly and consistently portrays Mithras Helios as separate divinities, there are also numerous inscriptions in which Mithras is himself called ‘the unconquered sun’ (*sol invictus*)”.⁵⁵ Mithras in the Roman period is *Sol Invictus*, the Invincible Sun God, and is called in the votive inscriptions *Sol Invictus Mithras*, *Deus Sol Invictus Mithras*, *Deus Sol Mithras*, and *Sol Mithras*.⁵⁶ The relation of the Mithraic *Sol Invictus* to the public cult of the deity with the same name is unclear and perhaps non-existent.⁵⁷ However, in the Mithraic context *Sol Invictus* may be depicted undertaking many activities and according to some scholars the god is to be identified with Mithras,⁵⁸ although there is a lack of agreement among them regarding this issue.⁵⁹

Porphiry, quoting the lost work of Euboulos, states that Mithras was worshipped in a cave: “First of all, according to Eubulus, Zoroaster consecrated a natural cave in the mountains near Persia, a flowery cave with springs,⁶⁰ to the honor of Mithras, the creator and father of the universe (εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ πάντων ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς Μίθρου), since the cave was for him an image of the cosmos that Mithras created (εἰκόνα φέροντος αὐτῷ τοῦ σπηλαίου τοῦ κόσμου, ὃν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε). The objects arranged symmetrically within the cave were symbols of the elements and regions of the cosmos”.⁶¹ Thus, the *Mithraeum* imitates the cave in which Mithras killed the bull.⁶² Moreover, both the literary sources and visual works of art inform us that Mithras was miraculously born from a rock.⁶³ This is further reinforced by an inscription that

⁵⁵ Ulansey 1989: 107; cf. also Alvar 2008: 100.

⁵⁶ See Clauss 2000: 146; Turcan 2000: 224; Hijmans 2009: 185; Forsythe 2012: 136; see also Cumont 1956a: 146; Cumont 1963: 136. Hijmans (2009: 166) claims that “In his name *Sol Invictus Mithras* is normally treated as one deity, but in Mithraic art *Sol* and *Mithras* are invariably depicted as two separate ones”. Furthermore, Beck (2006: 5-6, 10-11, 81-85) proposes two axioms for the Mithraic mysteries.

⁵⁷ Cf. Alvar 2008: 203.

⁵⁸ See Cumont 1956: 188; Halsberghe 1972: 45 and n. 1.

⁵⁹ See Halsberghe 1972: 117-122.

⁶⁰ See Clauss 2000: 67-68 (Fig. 28).

⁶¹ Porphyry, *De Antro* 6 (= Lambertson 1983: 25); see also Clauss 2000: 42; Beck 2006: 6, 81-87.

⁶² Clauss (2000: 42) states that “Because Mithras killed the bull in a cave, his followers likewise performed the ritual reproduction of this saving act in a cave, or rather in a shrine which reproduced that cave, in a *spelaeum* (‘cave’)”.

⁶³ It should be pointed out that, curiously, no pagan literary source mentions the rock-birth of the god; rather, there are several Christian writers who refer to it; see, for example, Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 70.1 (... ἐκ πέτρας γεγενῆσθαι αὐτόν, ...); Commodian, *Instr.* 1.13: *Invictus de petra natus si deus habetur* (The unconquered one was born from a rock, if he is regarded as a god); Iulius Firmicus Maternus, *De Errore* XX.1 (... θεὸς ἐκ πέτρας ...); Johannes Lydus, *De Mens.* III.26 (... ὡσπερ τὸν πετρογενῆ Μίθραν ...). For a discussion of the rock-birth of Mithras and its representations in monuments, depicting him emerging from a rock, see Vermaseren 1951: 285-301; Cumont 1956: Figs. 30-31; Merkelbach 1984: 96-98, Abb. 46, 48, 68, 97, 158; Ulansey 1989: Ill. 3.7 (p. 36); Clauss 2000: 62-71, Ills. 23-30, 32.

reads: *D(eo) O(mnipotenti) S(oli) Invi(cto), Deo Genitori, r(upe) n(ato)* ("To the almighty God Sun invincible, generative god, born from the rock").⁶⁴ Accordingly, the rock symbolizes the universe (*cosmos*), recalling either the mythical cave where the bull-slaying (*tauroctony*) occurred, or the *mithraeum*-cave, where the rites and rituals were practiced.⁶⁵

Concerning the role of the large main cave, the so-called "The Temple Cave" (Figs. 14-15), in the complex of the 18 caves (Figs. 8-9), it would seem to have been used as a cultic site, that is, a *Mithraeum*. It should be noted that the cult of Mithras was practiced in cave-temples or in secret chapels. Many elements of the cults of Mithras and *Sol Invictus* were indeed common to both,⁶⁶ despite these being two different and independent divinities.

Conclusion

We may conclude the following: a) The complex of the 18 caves, adjacent to "The Man in the Wall" relief, even if they had functioned as places of refuge in the Early Roman period, by the Middle and Late Roman periods were being used as dwellings. b) The five iconographic characteristics, discussed above, also featuring in Roman art, together with the large main cave in the complex of the 18 caves, suggest that the sunken relief in the rock, "The Man in the Wall", can be identified with a deity, more precisely with that of *Sol Invictus/Mithras*, albeit bearing a sword and possibly also a dagger for the bull-slaying (*tauroctony*).⁶⁷ c) It seems that the large main cave functioned as a *Mithraeum*, where the inhabitants of the complex of caves, as well as others in the area, practiced rites and rituals within it for the veneration and worship of the god. d) The relief can be attributed to the end of the 2nd-beginning of the 4th century CE.

The identification of "The Man in the Wall" with *Sol Invictus Mithras* indicates a cultic pagan activity in this remote area, practiced in the large main cave. Moreover, the location of a *Mithraeum* in the heart of nature, in an isolated place rather than in an urban area, offers us a highly exceptional case.⁶⁸

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⁶⁴ See Clauss 2000: 62.

⁶⁵ See Clauss 2000: 65; Alvar 2008: 81.

⁶⁶ See Halsberghe 1972: 119-120.

⁶⁷ On a sword, representing the *tauroctony*, see Alvar 2006: Pl. 14 (p. 452).

⁶⁸ As, for example, in Caesarea Maritima, Capua, Dura-Europos, Ostia, Rome, and so on.

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Fig. 1. Panoramic view of the cliffs in Keziv Stream (Nahal Keziv), facing south (photo: Y. Shivtiel).



Fig. 2. South-eastern corner of the Hellenistic compound (mausoleum?) (photo: A. Ovadiah).



Fig. 3. North-eastern corner of the Hellenistic compound (mausoleum?) (photo: A. Ovadiah).



Fig. 4. The entrance and the south-western corner of the Hellenistic compound (mausoleum?) (photo: A. Ovadiah).



Fig. 5. The entrance to the Hellenistic compound (mausoleum?), facing east (photo: A. Ovadiah).

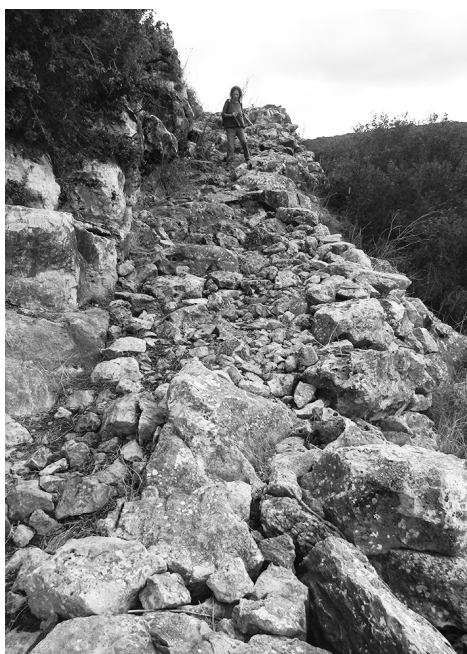


Fig. 6. General view of the road, leading to “The Temple Cave” complex and the sunken relief figure, facing north (photo: Y. Shivtiel).



Fig. 7. General view of the road, leading to "The Temple Cave" complex and the sunken relief figure, facing west (photo: K. Adar).



Fig. 8. Panoramic view of the cliff with "The Temple Cave" and 18 caves, north of Nahal Keziv (photo: V. Boslov).



Fig. 9. Close up of Fig. 8 (photo: Y. Shivtiel).



Fig. 10. General view of the sunken relief figure, facing north (photo: K. Adar).

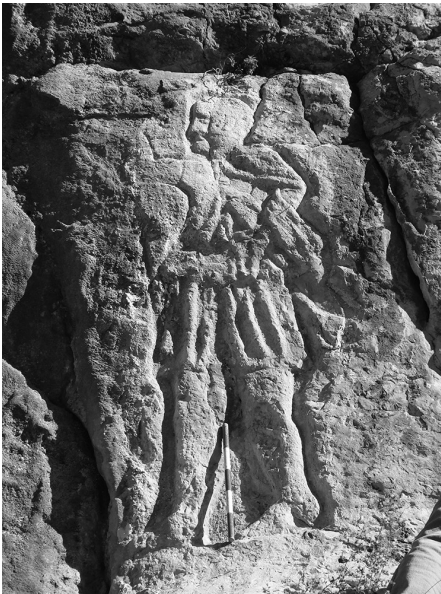


Fig. 11a. The sunken relief figure, facing north (photo: A. Ovadiah).

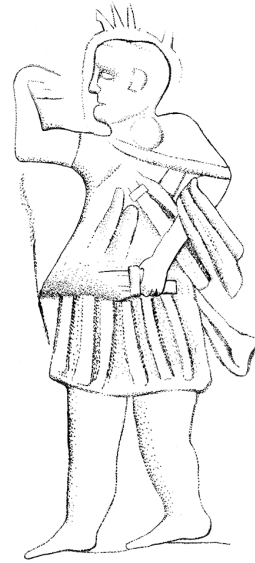


Fig. 11b: Drawing of the sunken relief figure (drawn by Sapir Haad).



Fig. 12. The upper body of the figure and its radiate crown (photo: A. Ovadiah).



Fig. 13. The rectangular frame above the head of the figure, possibly intended for an inscription (photo: Y. Shivtiel).



Fig. 14. The front (entrance) of “The Temple Cave”, facing north (photo: K. Adar).

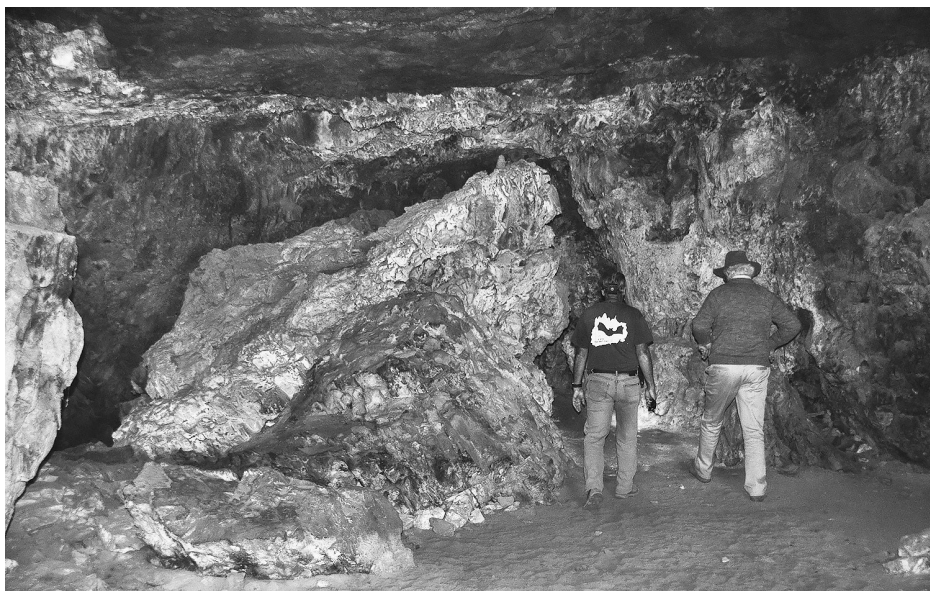


Fig. 15. The two rock boulders in the interior of "The Temple Cave", facing north (photo: K. Adar).



Fig. 16. The semicircular niche on left side of the entrance to "The Temple Cave" (photo: Y. Shvitiel).

