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# Identification of infanticide in archaeological sites: A case study from the Late Roman-Early Byzantine periods at Ashkelon, Israel

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### Abstract

Skeletal remains of nearly 100 infants found in a Late Roman-Early Byzantine sewer at the site of Ashkelon, on the Israeli coast were examined. Attention focused on the reason for their presence in the sewer, and alternative hypotheses for the absence of normal burial that were considered included an epidemic or massacre. Detailed examination of bones and teeth showed all the infants to be neonates. The absence of neonatal lines on the teeth suggests that they died within a day or two after birth. The absence of older infants demonstrates that the sewer was not used for infant burial in general, and may have been used specifically for disposal of unwanted infants.



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## Keywords

Late Roman-Early Byzantine Period; Israel; Ashkelon; Infant Burials; Infanticide

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