

From Herod to the Great Revolt

Herod's reign had united almost all of the land of Palestine, but his death brought about its division and a period of fluctuating boundaries and political statuses. For most of the first century, territory shifted back and forth between rulers appointed by the Roman emperor. These appointees were initially all sons of Herod, but Roman reliance solely on client kings to administer the region proved short lived. Within a few years, Judea and Samaria were converted into a Roman province overseen by Roman governors, an arrangement that lasted for most of the period leading up to the first Jewish revolt, while members of the Herodian dynasty ruled over other parts of the territory. Neither the Roman governors nor the Herodian client kings had access to the vast resources that Herod the Great had possessed, and the pace of construction of Roman monumental architecture slowed considerably. No building projects in the early decades of the first century seem to have matched Caesarea Maritima or Jerusalem in scale, but even smaller projects like those at Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Baniyas were highly significant in reshaping the landscape to display Roman cultural influence and domination as well as the political stature of their sponsors (fig. 5.1). Ultimately, the combined strains of Roman rule and internal divisions led to ruptures in Jewish society and the Great Revolt, a war followed within a few decades by the dissolution of the Herodian dynasty and the annexation of the entire region as a Roman province.¹

The Division of Herod's Kingdom

A glimpse of the turmoil ahead was visible in the unrest that broke out soon after Herod's death (fig. 5.2). A Passover riot in Jerusalem was suppressed by Herod's son Archelaus, reportedly resulting in the deaths of three thousand people, some of them on the Temple Mount (*War* 2.10–13; *Ant.* 17.213–18). Roman forces arriving in Jerusalem from



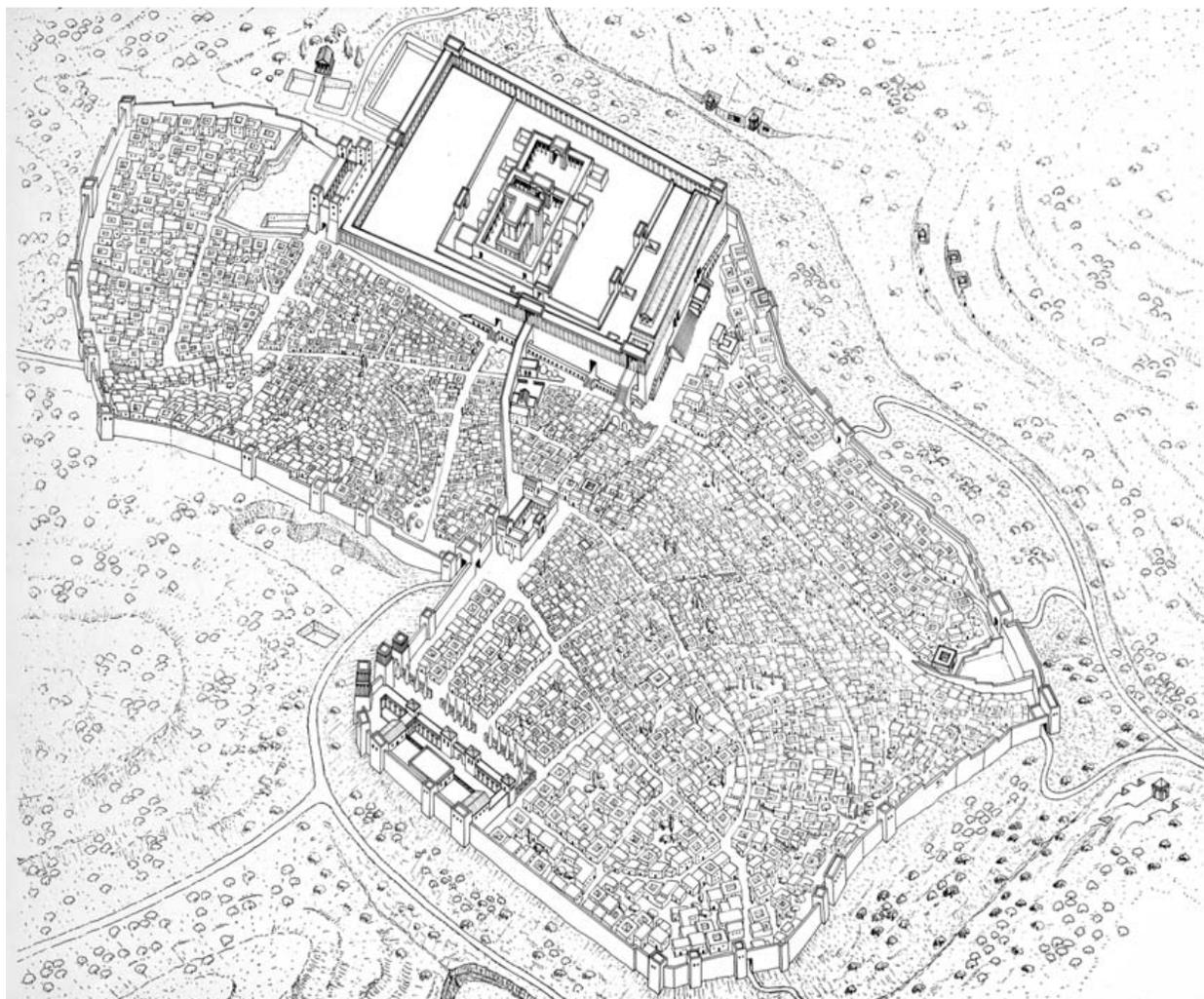


Fig. 5.1. Reconstruction of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus (Reconstruction drawing by Leen Ritmeyer)

Syria prompted a violent reaction that led to their own besiegement in Herod's palace and considerable damage to the porticoes of the Temple (*War* 2.39–54; *Ant.* 17.250–68). In Galilee, Judas, the son of the earlier rebel Hezekiah, led an uprising, while the royal slave Simon started a revolt in Perea. Elsewhere, a shepherd named Athrongaeus attempted to seize power, and even some of Herod's own Idumean troops lurched toward rebellion (*War* 2.55–65; *Ant.* 17.269–85). The troubles escalated enough that Varus, Roman legate of Syria, intervened, marching south to Jerusalem and Idumea and reportedly razing several towns along the way (*War* 2.66–79; *Ant.* 17.286–98).

Struggles for power in Palestine also occurred in the imperial court as Herod's sons vied for their father's throne. Faced with the

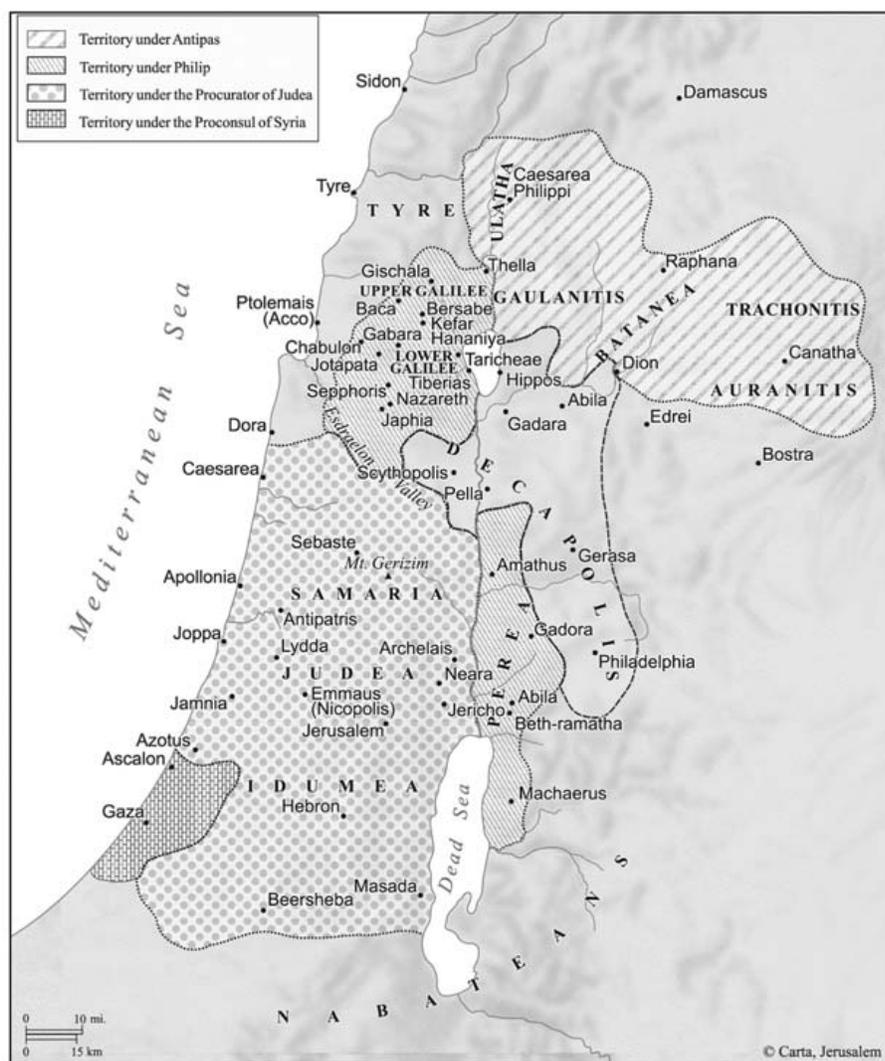


Fig. 5.2. The division of Herod's kingdom (Map prepared by Carta, Israel Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.)

confusion created by multiple versions of Herod's will, Augustus decided to divide his kingdom three ways. The emperor declined to bestow the highest title of *basileus* (king) on any of Herod's sons, at least for the moment. Instead, he named Archelaus an *ethnarch* (ruler of a people), with the promise that effective rule might eventually lead to his elevation to king. The ethnarchy of Archelaus included Judea, Samaria, and most of the coastal cities, though Gaza was attached to the province of Syria, along with the Decapolis cities of Gadara and Hippos. Antipas and Philip were granted the lesser title of *tetrarch* (ruler of a fourth). Antipas received Perea, the area east of the Jordan River between the Decapolis and the Nabateans, and Galilee, while

Table 5.1. The Herodian Dynasty

Ruler	Area	Dates
Herod the Great	most of Palestine	37–4 B.C.E.
Archelaus	Judea and Samaria	4 B.C.E.–6 C.E.
Antipas	Galilee and Perea	4 B.C.E.–39 C.E.
Philip	Iturea and Trachonitis	4 B.C.E.–34 C.E.
Agrippa I	territory of Philip	37–44 C.E.
	Galilee	39–44 C.E.
	remainder of Herod’s territory	41–44 C.E.
Herod of Chalcis	Chalcis	41–48 C.E.
Agrippa II	Chalcis	48–53 C.E.
	Batanea, Trachonitis, and Gaulanitis	53–90s C.E.
	parts of eastern Galilee, Perea	61–90s C.E.

Philip took possession of the regions north and northeast of Galilee—Batanea, Trachonitis, and the area around Banias (*War* 2.94–100; *Ant.* 17.318–23).²

Archelaus’s rule was too brief to make a widespread impact on the archaeological record. Excavators have, however, positively identified the site of a new city he built and named for himself (*Ant.* 17.340). An inscription found at Khirbet el-Beiyudat, roughly 12 kilometers north of Jericho, declares, “You are now entering Archelais.” A 280-square-meter mansion there included a large courtyard divided by a row of columns, storage and living rooms, and a two-pooled miqveh. Nearby, a massive ashlar tower had walls that were more than a meter thick. Stone vessels in both the palace and the tower confirm that their occupants were Jewish.³ At Jericho, changes in Herod’s third palace might be attributed to Archelaus, in light of Josephus’s report that he rebuilt a palace there after it was destroyed in the tumult following Herod’s death (*Ant.* 17.340), but the site’s primary excavator thinks it more likely they were initiated by Herod himself.⁴

The best-known archaeological remains from the ethnarchy of Archelaus are his coins. The weights of his various denominations appear to have been modeled on the Roman standard, rather than

the Greek/Seleucid standard that Herod the Great had used. This change likely reflected an awareness that Roman influence had permanently eclipsed the Greek political dominance of early generations, and it was copied by other members of the Herodian dynasty when they struck their own coins. Archelaus's numismatic inscriptions included his title of ethnarch and his dynastic name Herod, rather than his Latin name Archelaus. Some of his coins' symbols were quite close to those on Herod's coins, such as cornucopiae and an anchor, while others, like a vine and galleys, were completely different.⁵

Little else is known of the reign of Archelaus, other than that by 6 C.E., his subjects had tired of his harsh hand. Both Jews and Samaritans sent envoys to Caesar to complain of his excesses. Caesar promptly deposed him, exiling him to Vienna and confiscating his property. The territories of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea were henceforth governed by a Roman official (*War* 2.117, in contrast to *Ant.* 17.354–55, which says they were joined to the province of Syria).

The Impact of Antipas

The longer reign of Antipas (4 B.C.E.–39 C.E.) left more extensive archaeological remains (fig. 5.3). Antipas devoted considerable energy to construction projects in Galilee.⁶ Josephus reports that Antipas rebuilt Sepphoris after Varus burned it down in the chaos following Herod the Great's death (*War* 2.68; *Ant.* 17.289), though no archaeological corroboration of that destruction has been found. If evidence of damage to the city is lacking, however, evidence of its development



Fig. 5.3. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C.E. to 39 C.E. The coin at left is dated to 39/40 C.E.; the reverse has a palm tree and “Herod the Tetrarch” in Greek. The coin at right, dated to 29/30 C.E., also reads “Herod the Tetrarch,” and includes the name of the mint city, Tiberias, on the reverse in a wreath. (Copyright David Hendin, used by permission)

Fig. 5.4. Water reservoir at Sepphoris, part of a larger Roman-period water system; this section post-dates Antipas (Photo courtesy of Eric Meyers)



in the first century C.E. is abundant. Settlement on the city's acropolis and its western summit began to grow, spilling over onto a plateau to the east that became the primary area of expansion in the second and later centuries. Excavators of a basilical building on the eastern plateau date its foundation and the beginnings of the city's orthogonal road plan to the first century, although others suggest a later date.⁷ An aqueduct was built to ensure an adequate water supply for

the city's increased population, which likely numbered between 8,000 and 12,000 (fig. 5.4).⁸ Though an origin during the reign of Antipas has been proposed for a Roman-style theater on the western summit holding 4,500–5,000 seats, majority opinion dates it to the late first or early second century C.E. Disagreement over the theater's date hinges on stylistic considerations and the interpretation of unpublished ceramic evidence from under its foundations. (The theater is discussed further in Chapter 10.)

Antipas named his new city *Autocratoris*, a name that honored the imperial title of *Autocrator*, the Greek equivalent of the Latin *Imperator* or, alternatively, a reference to the city's independent (literally, "self-ruling") status (fig. 5.5). The city appears to have been the only one in the empire to receive that name, which never gained wide usage. Aside from one passage (*Ant.* 18.27) Josephus always refers to the city as *Sepphoris*, and most later sources use its Hebrew name, *Zippori*, or its second-century C.E. Greek name, *Diocaesarea*.

In 20 C.E., Antipas issued a series of coins that announced his foundation of a new city in Galilee.⁹ Like *Sepphoris-Autocratoris*, the new city bore a name honoring the emperor: *Tiberias*, after the recently acceded *Tiberius*. Also like its sister city, *Tiberias* appears to have been the only one in the empire with its particular name. The new city was located at approximately the midpoint of the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Built on the site of old tombs, Antipas had to force settlers to live there (*Ant.* 18.36–38; cf. *War* 2.168). Despite initial difficulties in attracting inhabitants, the city's population grew to approximately the same size as *Sepphoris*.

Most of the archaeological findings from ancient *Tiberias* have been unearthed on the southern side of the modern city. A gate with two adjacent round towers is usually attributed to Antipas, though some have suggested that it actually dates to the late first or the second century C.E. (See plate 7.) A *cardo*, a north-south street, running parallel to the lake has also often been associated with the city's earliest years, as has a recently discovered Roman theater at the foot of *Mount Berenice*. Whether such structures date to the time of Antipas or to subsequent early rulers is not clear. Recent excavations have uncovered a villa decorated with columns, *opus reticulatum*, and marble that may be the palace of Antipas (*Life* 65, 68). If so, the use of marble in such an early context would be unusual; Palestine was not fully integrated into the marble network until after the revolt. Josephus men-



Fig. 5.5. Bronze prutah of Herod Antipas, struck at *Sepphoris* (1 B.C.E./1 C.E.). Obverse depicts a palm tree with the name *Herod*, and the reverse shows grain of barley surrounded by "Tetrarch, IV." (Copyright David Hendin, used by permission)

tions other public buildings; by the time of the first revolt, the city had a sizable *prosenche*, or building for prayer (*Life* 277), hot baths (*Life* 85), and a stadium of some sort (*War* 2.168, 3.539; *Life* 92, 331). A nine-meter-thick curved wall and another nearby wall found at the modern Galei Kinneret Hotel could be the remains of the stadium.¹⁰

Antipas's efforts were not wholly limited to Galilee. In Perea, he renamed Betharamptha, which had also suffered in the revolts after Herod's death (*War* 2.59), as Julias (*Ant.* 18.27; *War* 2.168) and probably used it as the region's administrative center. The location of this Julias is not clear, and little has been found in the archaeological record east of the Jordan River that can be securely associated with Antipas. (This Julias should not be confused with the distinct community of Bethsaida-Julias, which is discussed below.)

Antipas struck his coins in Galilee, minting his first issues in Sephoris and all subsequent ones in Tiberias. Galilee was predominantly Jewish, as evidenced by the widespread use of stone vessels and the occasional discovery of miqvaot as well as the writings of Josephus, the Gospels, and later rabbinic texts. Antipas's coins reflect sensitivity to the religious sensibilities of his subjects. They bore no portraits of the ruler himself, the emperor, or pagan deities, instead bearing images such as a wreath, a reed, or palm trees. Most were inscribed with the name of his city Tiberias, though the final series of coins, issued in 39 C.E., swapped this epigraphic reference for an inscription naming and honoring Gaius, who had replaced Tiberius on the throne.¹¹

The economic effects of Antipas's city building remain a point of considerable debate. Some scholars have argued that such massive construction projects must have had a negative impact on villages and small towns. The cities, they suggest, would have drained food and other resources from the countryside, resulting in shortages for many communities. In their view, smaller independently owned farms must have given way to larger estates. The building of two cities would have necessitated a high tax rate, the collection of which would have been facilitated by the increased monetary supply that resulted from the striking of coins by Antipas. The combined result of such changes would have been the creation of cycles of debt, land loss, and poverty for the masses. For most commoners, according to this line of reasoning, developments in Antipas's reign resulted in economic crisis and exploitation.¹²

Noting that such proposals are often based more on particular social-scientific theories than on the archaeological evidence itself, other scholars have offered a very different picture of first-century Galilee. In their view, the emergence of cities would have stimulated the region's need for foodstuffs and other products, and farmers and artisans would have benefitted from the increased level of demand. Precise information about the level of taxation under Antipas is lacking, but what does seem clear is that the very modest amount of coinage he struck would not have moved the economy to a new level of monetization; a mixed economy based on both barter and buying had been the norm since the influx of large amounts of Hasmonean coinage a century earlier. Villages such as Jotapata, Khirbet Cana, and Capernaum show indications of economic vitality, not decline, with increases in community size and in production of olive oil, textiles, and pottery. While the Gospels and other ancient literary sources refer to absentee landlords and tenant farmers, neither they nor the archaeological record provide sufficient data to trace shifts in patterns of ownership or crop production. To be sure, poverty was widespread throughout the ancient world, but if it increased suddenly and dramatically in Galilee because of the policies of Antipas, such developments are not clearly attested in the archaeological record.¹³

What is clear is that Antipas's construction of cities marked the introduction of a new level of Greco-Roman cultural influence in Galilee. By their names alone, the cities pointed to the power of the emperor. The introduction of orthogonal street planning arranged civic space in the style of the Romans, and monumental civic architecture appeared for the first time, if not in his reign then in the decades that immediately followed. Even so, this growth of Greco-Roman culture should not be exaggerated; it is best understood as foreshadowing of the more dramatic developments that would follow in the second and third centuries C.E.¹⁴

The Reign of Philip

If Antipas had named cities after the emperor and Archelaus after himself, their brother Philip combined these approaches, changing the name of Baniyas from Paneas, which honored the Greek deity, to Caesarea Philippi (*Ant.* 20.211; Mark 8:27; Matt 16:13). The name dis-

tinguished this Caesarea from his father's coastal city, though second- and third-century coins show that it was later abandoned for Caesarea Paneas. The city served as the location for Philip's mint, and the tetrastyle temple appearing on his coins is usually interpreted as Herod the Great's temple to Augustus.¹⁵ Caesarea Philippi at this point appears to have been only a modest city; excavations suggest that its area was quite small and had few residential structures.¹⁶

Philip's city-founding activity extended beyond Caesarea Philippi. At some point he built walls around the village of Bethsaida and renamed it Julias. One wonders if Jesus' disciple Philip, who hailed from Bethsaida according to John 1:44, was named after the tetrarch. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 18.27–28), Bethsaida's new name honored Augustus's daughter Julia. Noting that Julia was disgraced by charges of adultery in 2 B.C.E., some have suggested that Josephus's report is confused and that Bethsaida's new name actually recognized Augustus's widow Livia, who had become a member of the Julian family and taken the name Julia at his death. Ultimately, it is difficult to determine with certainty when and for whom Philip renamed Bethsaida.¹⁷

Nor is it clear exactly where Bethsaida-Julias was located, though excavators at et-Tell have argued that is the most likely candidate. They suggest that a rectangular basalt building at the site was a shrine to Livia built by Philip, identifying its various rooms as typical components of a temple: a porch, *pronaos* (entrance chamber), *naos* (main room), and *opisthodomos* (back room). As supporting evidence, they point to nearby discoveries of a female figurine that they identify as Livia and a bronze incense shovel, which they argue indicates the presence of the imperial cult. Other scholars, however, question the architectural comparison to a temple and note the lack of votive gifts, dedicatory inscriptions, animal bones from sacrifices, and other indisputable evidence of a temple cult. Some also note that et-Tell's location, a kilometer and a half north of the Sea of Galilee, seems to conflict with ancient references suggesting that Bethsaida was a lakeside town. The excavators have defended their identification of the site with claims that the water level was higher in antiquity and would have stretched to et-Tell, while critics counter that a water level that high would have inundated parts of other known first-century communities and submerged the known ancient harbors scattered around the lake.¹⁸

Regardless of whether Philip built an imperial temple, he defi-



Fig. 5.6. Two portrait coins of Herod Philip, the first Jewish ruler to place his portrait on coins. Left obverse depicts Augustus with legend “Of Caesar Augustus,” and the reverse has a portrait of Herod Philip and legend “Of Philip the Tetrarch” (1/2 C.E.). (Copyright David Hendin, used by permission)

nately found a way to honor the emperors that distinguished him from both his father and his brothers. He depicted the emperor and members of the imperial family on his coins, making him the first Jewish ruler to employ numismatic images of humans (fig. 5.6). Coins minted early in his reign portray Augustus on one side and Philip himself on the other, while others depict the emperor and a tetra-style temple. Images of Tiberius later replaced those of Augustus, and depictions of the temple varied among the different issues. A three-denomination series struck in 30/31 C.E. makes Philip’s relative stature clear: the largest portrays Tiberius, the medium size depicts Livia, and the smallest bears the image of Philip himself.¹⁹

Such images would not have offended the majority of Philip’s subjects, who were Gentiles. A sizable minority, however, were Jews, particularly in the area immediately northeast of the Sea of Galilee. Archaeological evidence of Jewish inhabitants has been found most notably at Gamla, in the form of stone vessels and one of the earliest known synagogues, as well as at et-Tell, which has also yielded fragments of stone vessels.²⁰

The Two Agrippas

When Philip died in Bethsaida-Julias in 33–34 C.E., he left no heirs. Upon the client king’s death, Tiberius attached his territory to Syria, though this would prove to be only a temporary arrangement; the area soon shifted to Agrippa I. Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, had been educated in Rome but left the city after squandering his wealth and falling into debt. Through the efforts of his sister Hero-

Fig. 5.7. Coins of Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. At left, obverse has portrait of Caligula, reverse has distyle temple with two facing figures and the legend “The Great King Agrippa, friend of Caesar” (42/43 C.E.). Center coin (37/38 C.E.) has portrait of Agrippa I on obverse; reverse has his son Agrippa II on horseback. The coin at right, dated to 41/42 C.E., was originally intended for circulation in Judea, which was added to the territory of Agrippa I in 41 C.E. The obverse depicts an umbrella-like canopy and “Of King Agrippa”; the reverse has three ears of barley. The canopy served as a sign of royalty. (Copyright David Hendin, used by permission)



dias, who was married to Herod Antipas, he received an appointment of *agoranomos* (market overseer) in Tiberias around 34 C.E. Agrippa soon departed Tiberias for Syria and then left Syria for the island of Capri, where he lived with Tiberius until the emperor imprisoned him for infelicitous comments about the positive political prospects of Gaius (Caligula). When Tiberius died and Gaius ascended the throne, he remembered Agrippa's support. He appointed him king over Philip's territory in 37 C.E. and gave him Antipas's territories two years later (*Ant.* 18.252; *War* 2.183). In 41 C.E., the new emperor Claudius expanded Agrippa's territory further with the gifts of Judea, Samaria, and northern parts of the Golan (*Ant.* 19.274; *War* 2.214–17). Agrippa thus ruled over a sizable kingdom, albeit only briefly (fig. 5.7).²¹

Agrippa's best-known construction project was the “Third Wall” in Jerusalem. A minority of scholars argues that this wall ran roughly along the northern border of the present Old City. Most, however, opt for a considerably larger expansion of the city's boundaries. They suggest that the wall stretched as far as 450 meters north of the present wall and pointing to several segments of a major wall discovered in that vicinity. If the latter position is correct, the new fortification practically doubled the size of the city, which now included Bezetha, just north of the Temple Mount. Agrippa did not complete the wall; Josephus attributes suspension of its construction to the king's death in one passage (*War* 2.218–19) and to Roman demands to cease work in another (*Ant.* 19.326–27). Jewish rebels later



Fig. 5.8. Coins of Agrippa II. Obverse of coin at left (83/84 C.E.) has a portrait of Domitian; the reverse depicts Tyche-Demeter holding ears of grain in the right hand and a cornucopia in the other, with the title “King Agrippa.” The coin at right, not dated, has a bust of Nero on obverse; on the reverse is an inscription naming Caesarea Paneas as the mint, with a legend that reads “In the time of King Agrippa, Neronias.” (Copyright David Hendin, used by permission)

finished it during the revolt (*War* 5.147–59). Remains of several towers have been found, though nowhere near the ninety that Josephus claims. Even after the city’s expansion, numerous buildings remained outside its walls. Agrippa built a new aqueduct for the city, probably in response to population growth (*Ant.* 19.328–31).²²

Agrippa also sponsored other projects. He funded games in Caesarea Maritima (*Ant.* 19.343), where coin finds from his reign date the renovation of the hippodrome, or stadium, adjacent to the Promontory Palace.²³ Numismatic evidence also suggests that he built a sizable (1.6 hectares) road station at Archelais with colonnaded porches decorated with pilasters and a miqveh.²⁴ Agrippa donated a theater, amphitheater, portico, and baths to Berytus (Beirut), where he also paid for gladiatorial games (*War* 1.422; *Ant.* 19.328, 335–37).

Agrippa’s coins reflect the steady increase of Roman influence on numismatic designs, with some modeled on coins issued in the city of Rome itself. Many portrayed the emperor and members of the imperial family, while still others bore the image of Agrippa and his family, including his son Agrippa II, the future king (fig. 5.8).²⁵ If, as has been suggested, the *phi rho* on one of his lead weights is an abbreviation for “friend of Caesar” (*philoromaios*), the title would make sense in light of his friendship with the emperor (Philo, *Against Flaccus* 25, 40).²⁶

Agrippa died after a short sickness in 44 C.E. Both Acts (12:20–23) and Josephus (*Ant.* 19.343–52) blame his demise squarely upon hubris. According to Acts, when Herod did not reject acclamation as a

god by the people of Tyre and Sidon, an “angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.” In Josephus’s version, Agrippa was greeted as a deity by the audience at a spectacle in Caesarea Maritima, accepted the flattery, and immediately fell ill with an abdominal disorder, dying five days later.

His son Agrippa II was only seventeen at the time (fig. 5.9). Claudius waited until he had aged four more years before awarding him the territory of Chalcis in 48 C.E. after its previous ruler, Herod of Chalcis, died. After the death of Agrippa I, Herod of Chalcis had been placed in charge of the Jerusalem Temple’s administration and given the authority to appoint the high priest. Now, Claudius transferred those powers to Agrippa II, giving him influence and power in Jerusalem even though his territory did not include Judea. In 53 C.E., Claudius removed Chalcis from Agrippa’s domain but assigned him territories in the Golan Heights (*War* 2.247; *Ant.* 20.137–38). Nero later gave him Tiberias and Taricheae in eastern Galilee and Julias and surrounding villages in Perea (*War* 2.252; *Ant.* 20.159). After Agrippa’s death, which probably occurred some time in the 90s C.E., the Romans returned Galilean and Perea territories to the province of Judea and annexed his northern territories into the province of Syria. He had been the longest reigning of the Herodian client kings.²⁷

Josephus writes that Agrippa II “embellished” Baniyas (*War* 3.514). An aqueduct there may date to his rule, and a palatial complex almost definitely does. The palace was massive, covering perhaps as many as ten thousand square meters and including a basilical building, courtyards, and vaulted passages. Its floors and walls were decorated with real marble, reflecting greater access to the stone than earlier Herodian kings had had. The city’s *cardo* dates to the first or second century and thus may also be associated with the king. The excavators suggest that it was during Agrippa’s reign that Caesarea Philippi acquired enough residents to be considered a true city rather than simply a governmental center (fig. 5.10).²⁸

In contrast to his father, Agrippa II almost always refrained from depicting himself on his coins. If the bust of a ruler appeared on an obverse, it was that of a Flavian emperor. Pan and other deities adorned the reverses of many coins, though smaller denominations include non-anthropomorphic images such as cornucopiae, a palm tree, an anchor, and corn. A few of his coins have Latin inscrip-

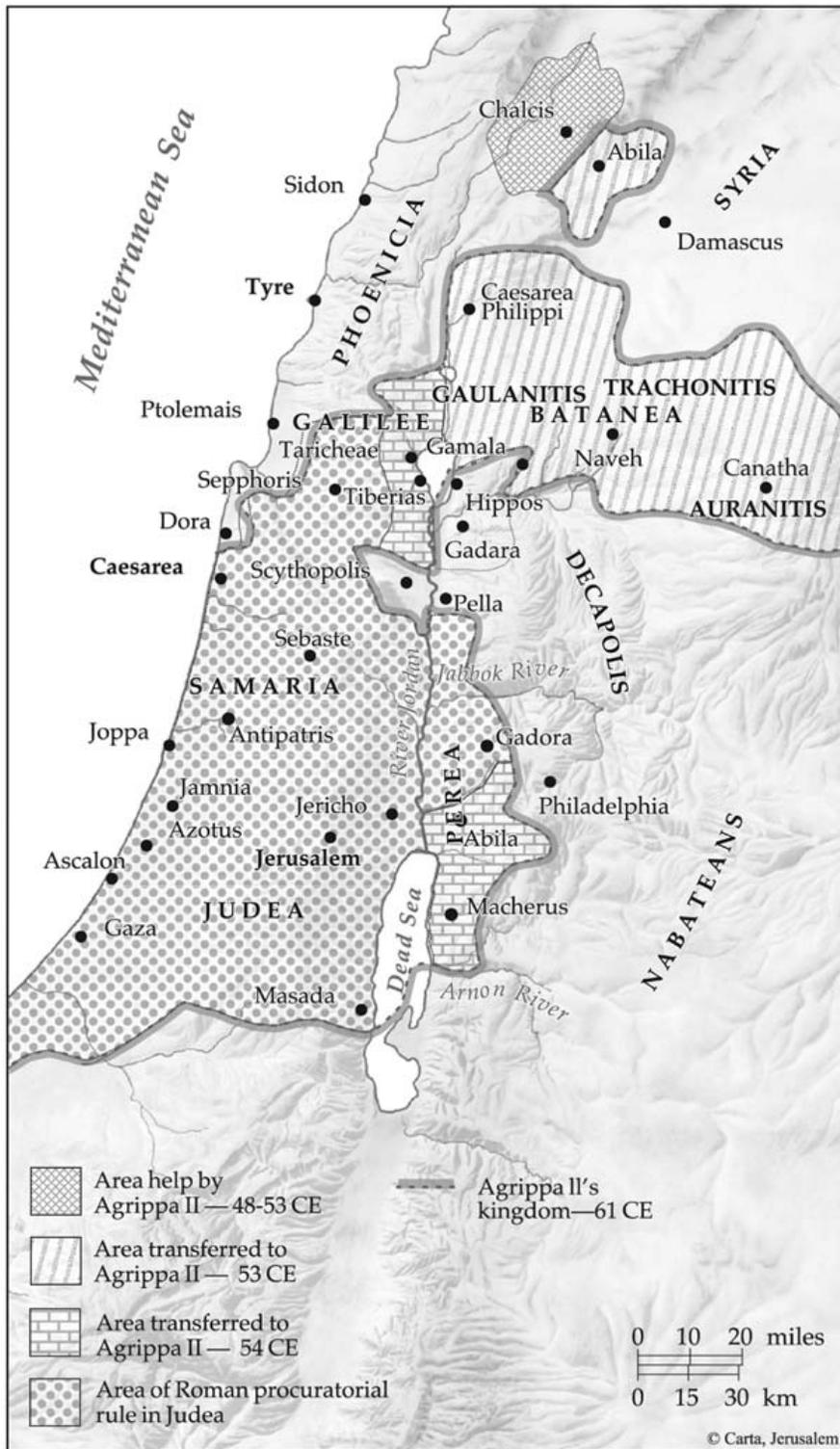


Fig. 5.9. The kingdom of Agrippa II, or Roman Palestine (Map prepared by Carta, Israel Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.)

Fig. 5.10. Cult shrine at Baniyas, or Caesarea Philippi (Photo courtesy of Sean Burrus)



tions, a feature that would have sharply distinguished them from most of the Roman East's Greek-bearing coins and one that his subjects almost certainly would have interpreted as a strong statement of Roman identity. As a loyal client king, Agrippa contributed troops to Rome's effort to suppress the Great Revolt, and he advertised the Roman victory by placing images of Nike, goddess of victory, on his coins, a choice reminiscent of coins issued by the Romans themselves that proclaimed *Judea Capta* ("Judea Captured").²⁹

Prefects and Procurators

Most Herodian client kings had Roman counterparts ruling other portions of Palestine as provincial governors. After the deposal of Archelaus, Judea and Samaria were placed under direct Roman rule as the province of Judea, and remained in that status for the rest of the century, with the exception of the three years in which Agrippa I held all Palestine (41–44 C.E.). After the death of Agrippa I, Galilee was added to the province, though some of its eastern communities were later parceled out to Agrippa II. Palestine's Roman governors are commonly known as procurators, though in fact they held the different title of prefect until the reign of Claudius. Many provinces had Roman senators as governors, but Judea's were only of equestrian

rank, an apparent reflection of the province's low stature and high propensity for unrest.³⁰

No Roman legionnaires were regularly stationed in the province in the pre-70 C.E. period. Instead, the Romans relied on auxiliary troops, primarily local recruits from Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste (*Ant.* 19.356–66, 20.122, 20.176; *War* 2.236). These units were stationed in Jerusalem, mainly at the Antonia Fortress overlooking the Temple Mount, and Caesarea Maritima. The total number of Roman troops in the province of Judea was quite small; when Agrippa I died, it consisted of only five cohorts and one cavalry unit, or approximately three thousand men (*Ant.* 19.365; cf. *War* 3.66). In times of serious trouble, the governor had to seek aid from his higher-ranked colleague, the legate of Syria, who commanded three to four legions.³¹

The Roman military and administrative contingent proclaimed its presence and authority through the striking of bronze coinage. Some governors issued no coins at all, while others, like Pontius Pilate, struck a considerable number (fig. 5.11). The physical quality of the procuratorial coinage varied widely, from crudely manufactured misstruck pieces to elegant specimens that are still well preserved. In adherence to eastern Mediterranean custom, these coins bore Greek, rather than Latin, inscriptions. Likely minted in Jerusalem, they have been found largely in Judea and Samaria and had only limited circulation in Galilee. None bore the name of the governor who issued them, but they can nonetheless be identified with particular prefects and procurators through their inscribed dates, which name the regnal year of the current emperor. A coin dated to the seventeenth year of Tiberius (30 C.E.), for example, was obviously struck by Pilate. The designs of these coins were far less provocative than they could have been, as they bore no busts of the emperor or prefect. Instead, most had images that provincial residents would have regarded as traditional, such as a palm tree, palm branches, lilies, cornucopiae, vines, and a wreath. Only a few departed from this pattern. Pilate issued coins with images of a *lituus* and a *simpulum*, implements used for Roman cultic acts, while Felix's coins had the regional motif of a palm tree on one side but spears and shields on the other, militaristic imagery that was likely intended as a reminder of Roman might. The consistent avoidance of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery may have reflected sensitivity to Jewish unease with figural representation (fig. 5.12).³²



Fig. 5.11. Coins of Pontius Pilate. Left, an inner wreath on obverse; on reverse, augur's wand and Greek legend "Of Tiberius" (30/31 C.E.). Coin at right depicts three bound ears of grain, with the legend "Julia, the queen" in Greek (Julia Olivia was the mother of Tiberius); the reverse depicts a libation ladle surrounded by the legend "Of Tiberius Caesar" (29/30 C.E.). None of the coins of procurators carried their own names. (Copyright David Hendin, used by permission)

Fig. 5.12. Ossuary of Caia-
phas, the high priest, during
the time of the trial of Jesus
(Photo courtesy of the Israel
Antiquities Authority)



Fig. 5.13. Inscription of
Pontius Pilate at Caesarea,
the only known attestation of
the name of the governor of
Judea who ordered the cruci-
fixion of Jesus (Photo cour-
tesy of the Israel Museum)



The Romans made Caesarea Maritima the administrative capital of the province, bolstering its status as the most Romanized city in the eastern Empire. The governors took over Herod's Promontory Palace, and its eastern wing and peristyle courtyard appear to have been added by the new administration. This complex may be the "praetorium of Herod" in which Paul was questioned (Acts 23:35). Elite resi-

dences elsewhere in the city took on the Roman trappings of colored plaster and mosaic decorations, and the city grew in size and population.³³

Only one of the first-century governors is mentioned in the city's many Roman-period inscriptions (fig. 5.13). A dedicatory inscription of Pontius Pilate is partially preserved on a limestone slab that was later reused as a step in the theater. The Latin inscription reads:

[—]s Tiberieum
[-P]ontius Pilatus
[praef]ectus Iuda[ae]e
[—]

No small amount of effort has been spent trying to reconstruct and understand this inscription. The

identification of “Pontius Pilate” is clear enough, as is the reference to his title of prefect of Judea. The “Tiberieum” has traditionally been interpreted as a shrine dedicated to the emperor. If that reading is correct, then the building’s construction may have gone against the preferences of the emperor himself, who often declined divine honors.³⁴ It conceivably could have been some other sort of building dedicated to the emperor.

The Growth of Jerusalem

Whether under client king or prefect, Jerusalem continued to grow in the first century. The city was impressive, even by Roman standards, as illustrated by Pliny the Elder’s description of it as “the most illustrious city in the East” (*Natural History* 5.70). Recent estimates of its population range from “a few tens of thousands” to more than two hundred thousand, with one hundred thousand being a common estimate. Whatever the correct figure, the number of people present would have swollen much more during the three annual pilgrimage festivals.³⁵ The city’s water needs were too great for its traditional springs, leading to further development of its aqueduct system. Pilate’s use of Temple funds for aqueduct construction sparked protests, while the later work by Agrippa I seems to have been uncontroversial (*War* 2.175–77; *Ant.* 18.60–62).

The Temple dominated the city physically, politically, and economically, and as would be expected, the areas adjacent to it underwent extensive development. Large buildings, some of them elite residences, sprang up below its southern gates, and shops occupied the few meters separating the western retaining wall from the north-south thoroughfare running parallel to it. Though this road seems to have been built by Herod the Great, it was repaved in the first century, judging from the dates of coins found underneath it.³⁶

Josephus refers to several examples of prominent civic architecture in Jerusalem, though their locations remain unknown. A xystus, usually thought of as a porticoed area devoted to exercise and athletics, west of the Temple Mount was joined to it by a bridge (*War* 2.344, 5.144, 6.325, 8.377). Josephus implies that a hippodrome stood not far from the Temple (*War* 2.44; *Ant.* 17.254–55). Whether the structure was built by Herod or one of his successors is not known.



Fig. 5.14. Pool of Siloam, Jerusalem, south of Temple Mount, where pilgrims ascended to enter the Temple after ritual purification (Photo courtesy of Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com)

Another public project was the renovation of a first-century B.C.E. pool in the southeastern part of the city (fig. 5.14). The pool received a new pavement of limestone ashlar. Fed by runoff water and the nearby Gihon spring, the pool had steps leading into it on all sides and a colonnaded walkway to the north. Over two hundred meters long, this pool could have been used by hundreds of people at a time. Given its location on the slope above the Kidron Valley and near the end of the Tyropoeon Valley, it is very likely the Pool of Siloam referred to by Josephus (*War* 5.140; cf. John 9:7). (The nearby pool also known as the Pool of Siloam that is located at the entrance to Hezekiah's Tunnel actually dates only to the Byzantine period.) Another pool from the late Second Temple period located north of the city where the Church of Saint Anne now stands has been identified as the Pool of Bethesda. Ronny Reich concludes that pilgrims used both it and the Pool of Siloam for ritual immersion and that they found numerous ways to guard their personal modesty.³⁷



Fig. 5.15. Stone vessels from the Burnt House, Jerusalem (Photo courtesy of Hillel Geva, the Israel Exploration Society)

The wealth of many of the city's residents is reflected in the remains of their houses, which were destroyed in the revolt. (See plate 8.) Lavish residences stretched across the Upper City toward the Temple Mount. Many of these buildings were quite large, and some appear to have had second stories. Molded stucco and painted plaster decorated their walls, particularly in the dining rooms. Some painted walls imitated marble panels, while others bore architectural, floral, and geometric motifs. Some houses even had images of living things, showing a flexible attitude toward the traditional Jewish prohibition of representational art. Stucco moldings, for example, include the shapes of a rabbit, an antelope, a lion, and perhaps even a pig. One painted wall in a residence on what is now called Mount Zion depicted birds. More distinctively Jewish designs were also found, including a menorah carved into the plastered wall of a house in the eastern Upper City, one of the oldest known depictions of the Temple candelabrum. Mosaics adorned the floors of these houses, some of them multicolored, others black and white in a style common elsewhere in the Roman world. Geometric and floral designs were omnipresent in these mosaics, with rosettes being especially common, and figural representation appears to have been entirely absent.³⁸

Miqvaot are common finds in these houses, as are a variety of stone implements, ranging from utensils to serving pieces to large



Fig. 5.16. Everyday pottery from the Burnt House, Jerusalem (Photo courtesy of Hillel Geva, the Israel Exploration Society)

storage vessels to entire tables. Both miqvaot and stone vessels reflect a high level of concern with ritual purity, and the proximity of these houses to the Temple strongly suggests that priestly families occupied them (fig. 5.15). A stone weight found in the so-called Burnt House, an excavated structure destroyed by the conflagration of the revolt, confirms this for one residence; its Semitic inscription, “of Bar Qatros,” likely refers to the Qatros priestly family. However, it is surprising to note the paucity of imported vessels in the Burnt House. Excavator Hillel Geva notes the presence of only two amphorae, sherds of several lamps, and a few other pieces (fig. 5.16).³⁹

In some domiciles, however, imported fine pottery and wine amphorae demonstrate a familiarity with luxury goods. The families that lived in these Jerusalem houses had a propensity for decorated tablewares, both foreign and locally produced. A new style of cooking pan also appears, one found elsewhere primarily at elite dwellings such as the Herodian palaces. Its flat shape reflects the clear influence of Italian-style casserole pans. The combination of these Italian pans, elegant tablewares, and frescoed triclinium-like dining rooms suggests Romanophile tendencies, at least on the level of dining and living customs.⁴⁰

Wealthy residents of Jerusalem continued the custom introduced in the Hasmonean period of burying the deceased in elaborately decorated tombs, some of them accompanied by impressive monuments. Such tombs are found on all sides of the walled city. Among the bet-



Fig. 5.17. Typical pottery found in a Jewish tomb from the early Roman period at Isawiyeh, Jerusalem (Photo courtesy of the ASOR Archive)

ter known today are the Tomb of Absalom, with its famous cone-shaped monument, and the adjacent tomb of Jehoshaphat, clearly visible down in the Kidron Valley from the eastern limits of the city. West of the city, a foundation for a monument is clearly visible in front of what is often called Herod's family tomb, in the modern park adjacent to the King David Hotel.⁴¹ To the north, not far beyond the Third Wall, stood the Tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene, often called the Tomb of the Kings. The queen was a convert to Judaism who had relocated to Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.17–95). Her tomb was marked by three pyramids on its top, a Doric frieze with acanthus leaves, wreaths, and grapes, and an elaborately decorated facade with attached Ionic columns. The traveler Pausanias considered this tomb noteworthy enough to mention along with the mausoleum of Halicarnassus as among the most beautiful tombs he had seen (7.16.5). Mount Scopus was also the site of impressive burials, such as that of Nicanor, whom inscriptions identify as a donor to the Temple. Other decorated tombs in Jerusalem's necropolis included the Sanhedrin Tomb, the Tomb of the Grapes, and the Tomb of the Frieze. Tombs like these, with outer decorations visible to passersby, advertised the stature of the deceased and their families and contrasted sharply with the hundreds of more simple rock-cut tombs found elsewhere around the city (fig. 5.17).⁴²

Constructing Jewish Identity Under Roman Rule

Such opulent demonstrations of wealth were not common in most of the rest of Palestine, particularly the Jewish areas. For example,

imported slipped dishes of the types found in Jerusalem houses had been common earlier at Galilean sites, but they are absent from first-century C.E. strata, where undecorated, locally produced vessels take their place. Galilee's ceramic profile differs in this regard from those of adjacent pagan sites, however, which continued to import the red-slipped plates and bowls known as Eastern Sigilatta A. Thus, trade networks that could have provided Galileans with red-slipped pottery were still in place, but Galileans ceased importation of those wares. Similarly, the imported Italian-style pans found in elite Jerusalem houses and Herodian palaces are far less common in Galilee and other areas. In contrast to Jerusalem, most predominantly Jewish communities showed a strong preference for simple pottery from regional workshops, many of them relatively new centers of production that had appeared only in the previous century. Such a preference might indicate a desire by those in smaller communities to differentiate themselves from the wealthy, often Romanized tastes of the region's elites or a desire to rely on Jewish artisans, rather than pagan potters; the two explanations are not mutually exclusive, of course.⁴³

Another notable pattern is reflected in the usage of lamps. In the late Second Temple period, a new form of lamp became common, the so-called Herodian lamp, which had a spatulated, knife-ported nozzle attached to a round, molded body and little or no decoration (fig. 5.18). Herodian lamps are found mostly at Jewish sites, though some examples have also been found at predominantly pagan sites. Neutron activation, X-ray fluorescence, and micromorphological analyses show, however, that lamps recovered at Jewish sites in Galilee differ in provenance from those appearing at Gentile sites. Although Herodian lamps at Gentile sites were produced at nearby regional workshops, those at Jewish sites, in contrast, were produced primarily by Judean workshops near Jerusalem. Galilean Jews thus preferred to import Herodian lamps from the south rather than rely on those manufactured at closer workshops. This reliance on Judean potters reflects the cultural affinity that linked Jews in both the south and the north.⁴⁴

An increased interest in ritual purity illustrates how relatively new practices functioned to help construct a strong sense of distinctively Jewish identity. The use of stone vessels that had begun in the previous century continued to spread throughout the Jewish parts of



Fig. 5.18. Selection of Herodian lamps from the Burnt House during Jerusalem excavations (Photo courtesy of Hillel Geva, the Israel Exploration Society)

Palestine. Vessels and fragments have been discovered at dozens of sites in Judea and Galilee, and archaeologists have found evidence for sixteen large-scale production centers as well as smaller house-based workshops in the two regions. In Galilee, for example, workshops have been discovered at Reina and Bethlehem (the latter not to be confused with the Judean Bethlehem). Stone vessels are generally absent from sites in Samaria and Gentile areas, however.⁴⁵ Ritual baths also continued to multiply in Judea and, to a much lesser extent, to Jewish areas to the north. They varied considerably in their particulars, differing in size and the presence or absence of a storage pool (otsar) and an inner partition. Several hundred appear in diverse settings, having been discovered in large cities and small villages, in private and public contexts, near agricultural installations such as winepresses and olive presses, in houses big and small as well, in association with synagogues and at the entrance to the Jerusalem Temple complex.⁴⁶ The interest in purity reflected by ritual baths and stone vessels continued beyond the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., and we will return to the topic in Chapter 8.

The Jewish practice of secondary burial also extended well beyond its point of origin in Jerusalem. It is difficult to gauge how quickly it spread, but by the middle of the first century C.E. it was well established at Jericho, where an ossuary inscription mentions Agrippina, the wife of Emperor Claudius. Limestone ossuaries have been

discovered at other sites in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, though not all sites have them (Qumran, for example). Though the date of their introduction in Galilee is unclear, they were definitely in use there by the end of the first or the early second century C.E. and may well have appeared several decades earlier.⁴⁷

Such commonality in material culture underscores the shared cultural identity held by many Jews throughout the different regions of Palestine. It reflects an increasing emphasis on ethnic and religious distinctiveness in response to growing imperial domination by the Romans. As widespread evidence of shared practices, these features provide strong support for reconstructions of early Judaism that emphasize the common elements that bound Jews together, even in the midst of the diversity reflected in ancient literary sources.⁴⁸