

# CHAPTER 21

# HEROD AND HIS SONS

## 37 BCE TO 6 CE

It took Herod almost three years to realize the kingdom granted to him by the Roman Senate. After the capture of Jerusalem (37 BCE), his rule would extend another thirty-four years (*Ant.* 17:191; *War* 1:665; cf. *As. Mos.* 6:6), longer than any other sovereign during the days of the Jewish Second Commonwealth. Historians commonly identify three periods of his reign. During the first twelve years (37–25 BCE), Herod consolidated power. There still existed those both inside and outside of Herod’s kingdom who resisted his rule. The second period (25–13 BCE) was a time of great prosperity. His relationship with Rome deepened, founded on the strength of his relationship with Caesar Augustus. It was also during this time that Herod accomplished most of his extensive building. The size of his kingdom reached its greatest extent, including lands not even ruled by Alexander Jannaeus. The final years of Herod’s reign (13–4 BCE) were marked by domestic strife and the king’s declining health.

### HEROD’S EARLY YEARS (37–25 BCE)

The first years of Herod’s rule were a deft balancing act within the changing political fortunes of the Roman Empire. This era marked the final phase of the Roman civil wars and Octavian’s defeat of Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium (31 BCE). Against this backdrop, Herod also faced challenges closer to home. Cleopatra III, Queen of Egypt, used her considerable influence over Antony to obtain parts of Herod’s kingdom. Her aim was to reestablish Egyptian control over lands that had previously been in the possession of the Ptolemies: Judea and the lands of the Nabateans.

When the Roman Senate in 40 BCE awarded Herod the diadem, it also granted him the lands of the ethnarch Hyrcanus: Judea (including eastern Idumea), Perea, Galilee and the Jezreel Valley (*Avi-Yonah* 2002:86). Appian’s record that in 39 BCE Antony expected Herod to collect imperial taxes in (western) Idumea and Samaria (*App. Bell. Civ.* 5.8.75) indicates that the new king also possessed responsibility for these areas. Since there is no record of a separate occasion when these regions were given to Herod, it seems likely that they were included in the lands awarded by the Roman Senate in 40 BCE.

Control over western Idumea and Samaria gave Herod access to important coastal settlements. Although the Parthians had razed Marisa (*Ant.* 14:364; *War* 1:269), Jamnia and Azotus remained important possessions on the plains of Idumea (1 Macc 4:15: ἕως τῶν πεδίων τῆς Ἰδουμαίας καὶ Ἀζότου καὶ Ἰαμνείας; cf. *Ant.* 12:308). Control of Samaria brought with it the important ports of Joppa and Apollonia. Likewise, the strategic site of Arethusa-Pegae (*War* 1:156: Ἀρέθουσαν; *Ant.* 13:261: Πηγὰι; *Vitelli et*

Now Herod took steps to negotiate his release in order to gain favor with the Hasmoneans. The Parthians had mutilated Hyrcanus’ ear to prevent him from being a contender for the throne of Antigonus. His disfigurement still prevented him from returning to his duties as high priest, leaving him as little threat to Herod.

The king could have appointed other members of the Hasmonean family to follow Antigonus, but his suspicious nature led him to appoint “an unknown priest named Ananel” from

Babylon (*Ant.* 15:22: ἱερέα τῶν ἀσημοτέρων Ἀνάμηλον; cf. *m. Para* 3:5: לַאֲמֵן; *VanderKam* 2004: 394–398). Alexandra, Herod’s mother-in-law and daughter of Hyrcanus, objected to this ignominy suffered by the Hasmoneans and used her friendship with Cleopatra to coerce the appointment of her young son, Jonathan Aristobulus III (*Ant.* 15:23–24; *War* 1:437; *Carroll* 1992: 1:383; *VanderKam* 2004:398–405). Under pressure from Alexandra and Mariamme, Herod relented and replaced Ananel with Aristobulus, when the young Hasmonean was barely seventeen years old (*Ant.* 15:39–41).

During the Feast of Tabernacles that year (c. 35 BCE), Aristobulus began his service in the Temple. The crowds in Jerusalem received the young priest with great affection, which only confirmed Herod’s suspicions (*Ant.* 15:51–52). The king realized that he could not personally remove Aristobulus, lest he arouse the hostility of

his wife’s family and the people who loved the new high priest. Instead, Herod arranged the young man’s murder, while he was being entertained at Alexandra’s palace in Jericho. On an occasion when the young men were playing sport in the swimming pools that had been built by Alexander Jannaeus (*Netzer* 2001a:21–25), they held Aristobulus underwater until he drowned (*Ant.* 15:55; *War* 1:437).

Alexandra recognized who was behind her son’s murder and brought charges through Cleopatra to Antony. Antony eventually exonerated Herod of the charges, but the events did little to improve Herod’s relationship with Mariamme or her family. Resentment and suspicion would grow until Herod’s tragic removal of all he suspected of sedition.

As we mentioned, Cleopatra sought to expand



Facade of Herod’s Temple—a reconstruction. (Jerusalem, The Temple Institute)

*al.* 1917–20:406; *m. Parah* 8:10; *t. Ter.* 1:15) controlled trade routes through the coastal plain. It is here that later Herod would establish Antipatris in honor of his father (*War* 1:417; *Tsafirir, di Segni and Green* 1994:63).

Even with the increase of Judean territorial dominion under Herod, the Hasmonean aristocracy had not given up hope that one day a member of the priestly family would reascend the throne. Indeed, Herod’s divorce from Doris and marriage to Mariamme, granddaughter of Hyrcanus, was intended to secure his offspring the claim to the priestly dynasty (*War* 1:241). In the meantime, a Hasmonean was absent both from the throne and the position of high priest.

When Herod came to power, the elderly Hyrcanus was still in Parthian captivity, having been taken hostage when Antigonus ruled Judea (*Ant.* 15:11–20; cf. *Ant.* 14:366; *War* 1:273).

her kingdom at the expense of the neighboring rulers. “She asked Antony for Judea and Arabia, requesting him to take them away from their royal rulers” (i.e. Herod and Malchus, king of Arabia; *Ant.* 15:92; *War* 1:360). Although Antony resisted the full scope of Cleopatra’s designs, he granted Cleopatra the coastal regions that included Herod’s up to the Eleutherus River north of Beirut, with the exception of Tyre and Sidon (*Ant.* 15:95; *War* 1:361; *Plut. Ant.* 36.2–3).

The queen’s territorial ambitions left Herod in danger of having no access to the sea with the loss of his ports and coastal settlements. Antony also awarded her lands around Jericho and in the Transjordan (*Ant.* 15:96; *War* 1:361; *Dio Cassius* 49.32). Herod was able to mitigate this loss of territory by arranging to lease from Cleopatra, “those parts of Arabia that had been given to her and also the revenues of the region about Jericho” (*Ant.* 15:96). According to Josephus, Herod paid two hundred talents to lease his own lands and also served as a surety for the tributes from Arabia (*War* 1:362; *Ant.* 15:132). Herod struggled to collect the payments due from Malchus, and he was preparing to march against him when he received word of the impending battle between Octavian and Antony.

Herod offered to fight alongside Antony, but his benefactor instructed him to deal with Malchus instead. Herod’s first battle with the Nabateans was at Diospolis (*Ant.* 15:111; *War* 1:366; *Διόσπολις*). Abel has suggested that the site should be identified with Dium (Greek: Δίον) in the Transjordan (Abel 1952 1:354 n.2; cf. *idem.* 1938: 2:150, 306). If so, the amended reading likely resembled a similar toponymic reference in another campaign, “Alexander (son of Aristobulus II) marched again to the city Dium” (*Δίον πόλιν*; *Ant.* 13:393; cf. *Ant.* 14:75; Tell Ash<sup>c</sup>ari).

Although Herod’s forces routed the Nabateans at Dium, the next battle at Canatha in Coele-Syria proved disastrous (*War* 1:367–368; cf. *Ant.* 15:112). So devastating was Herod’s defeat that he was incapable of mustering a sufficient army to wage open war. He had to resort to guerrilla warfare.

Camping in the mountains and always avoiding open battle, he still did considerable damage by his incessant and energetic movements, and he was also very careful of his own men, using every means to make good his losses. (*Ant.* 15:120; cf. *War* 1:369)

Herod’s preoccupation with the Arabs proved fortuitous. At the Battle of Actium Herod’s benefactor was defeated. Antony returned to Egypt where he died by his own hand. Ironically, his demise also removed one of the greatest external threats to Herod’s kingdom—Cleopatra. Although Herod had not fought alongside Antony at Actium, he had remained a trusted ally sending money and grains (*Ant.* 15:190). Now, the changing political fortunes in the Roman Empire required that Herod move quickly and decisively (*Plut. Ant.* 72).

Herod rallied his forces and crossed the Jordan to attack the Nabatean forces near Philadelphia (Rabbath-ammon; *War* 1:380–385; *Ant.* 15:147–155). Many fell on both sides, but Herod prevailed. The Nabateans attempted to sue for peace, but Herod pressed forward until they surrendered and declared Herod their ruler (*Ant.* 15:160). Next he dealt with intrigues closer to home. He discovered that Hyrcanus had conspired with Alexandra to escape to Malchus (*Ant.* 15:167). Hyrcanus was brought before the Sanhedrin (cf. *m. Sanh.* 2:1), accused of treason and executed (*Ant.* 15:173).



The growth of Herod’s kingdom, 40–4 BCE.

Herod had effectively removed the Hasmonean threat to his throne. He now had to face Octavian. He traveled to Rhodes, leaving his mother, sister and all his children protected at Masada (*Ant.* 15:184), while Mariamme and Alexandra remained under guard at Alexandrion (*Ant.* 15:185–186). When Caesar received the king, Herod removed his crown but otherwise remained adorned in royal regalia (*Ant.* 15:187; *War* 1:387). He made no apology for his friendship and loyalty to Antony. Indeed, he stated that if he had not been otherwise engaged with the Arabs in the Transjordan, he would have fought alongside Antony. In that event, the outcome might have been different. Nevertheless, he now offered Caesar the same loyalty he had given to Antony.

Herod’s loyalty to Rome had been demonstrated time and again. There was no reason to suggest that he would not likewise serve the new emperor. “[Caesar] then restored his diadem to him, at the same time urging him to show himself no less a friend to him than he had formerly been to Antony” (*Ant.* 15:195). Herod pledged his loyalty to the new emperor and then accompanied him to Egypt, showering Caesar and his friends with extravagant gifts. The Judean king returned home with greater power than he had left, much to the consternation of his opponents.

Augustus not only retained Herod as king of Judea, he rewarded him with the return of the lands taken by Cleopatra. Herod was also given additional Greek cities: “Gadara, Hippius (cf. *Ant.* 14:75), and Samaria, and on the coast also Gaza, Anthedon, Joppa (Gaba; cf. *Ant.* 15:294; *Avi-Yonah* 2002:89) and Strato’s Tower” (*Ant.* 15:217; *War* 1:396). The addition of these Greek cities increased the non-Jewish population responsible to Herod’s rule. “Herod must have understood by then that all his attempts to obtain the favor of his Jewish subjects would be in vain. A strengthening of the Hellenized population in his kingdom would, therefore, strengthen somewhat the foundations of his rule” (*Avi-Yonah* 2002:89–90).

Herod proved to be an able and loyal client king to Rome. In 23 BCE Caesar once again enlarged Herod’s kingdom and entrusted to him the northeastern region of Trachonitis, Batanea and Auranitis (*Ant.* 15:343–344; *War* 1:398). Zenodorus had leased these lands (*Ant.* 15:344; *War* 1:398) after Antony executed Lysanias, son of Ptolemaeus, the last king of the Itureans, in 35 BCE (*Ant.* 15:92; *War* 1:440; *Dio Cass.* 49.32.5; cf. *Plut. Ant.* 36.3). The area was known for its brigandage. According to Josephus, not only did Zenodorus do nothing to prevent it, he even shared in the spoils (*Ant.* 15:345).

Augustus transferred to Herod the administration of these territories to restore order, and the Judean king “put a stop to their criminal acts and brought security and peace to the surrounding peoples” (*Ant.* 15:348). Three years later when Zenodorus died, the emperor rewarded Herod by appointing him the procurator of all of Syria and granting to him the remaining lands from Zenodorus’ tetrarchy. This included Gaulanitis, Paneas and the Ulatha region (*Ant.* 15:359–360; *War* 1:400).

To establish an increased measure of control, Herod settled the region with Idumeans and Jews from Babylonia. These new lands included in Herod’s kingdom brought new settlements with little previous history. Here Herod did not have to face a deposed aristocracy or religious qualms as he did in Judea. The population was indebted to Herod’s efforts on their behalf. The gratitude that they felt was exhibited in the continued loyalty they gave to Herod and his successors. For later members of the Herodian dynasty, Agrippa I (*Ant.* 18:237; *War* 2:181; cf. Schürer, Vermes and Millar 1973: 1:444) and his son, Agrippa II (*Ant.* 20:138; *War* 2:247; cf. Schürer, Vermes and Millar 1973: 1:472), this region was the testing ground for their administrative abilities. Once proven here, Rome granted them control of larger segments of Herod’s previous kingdom.

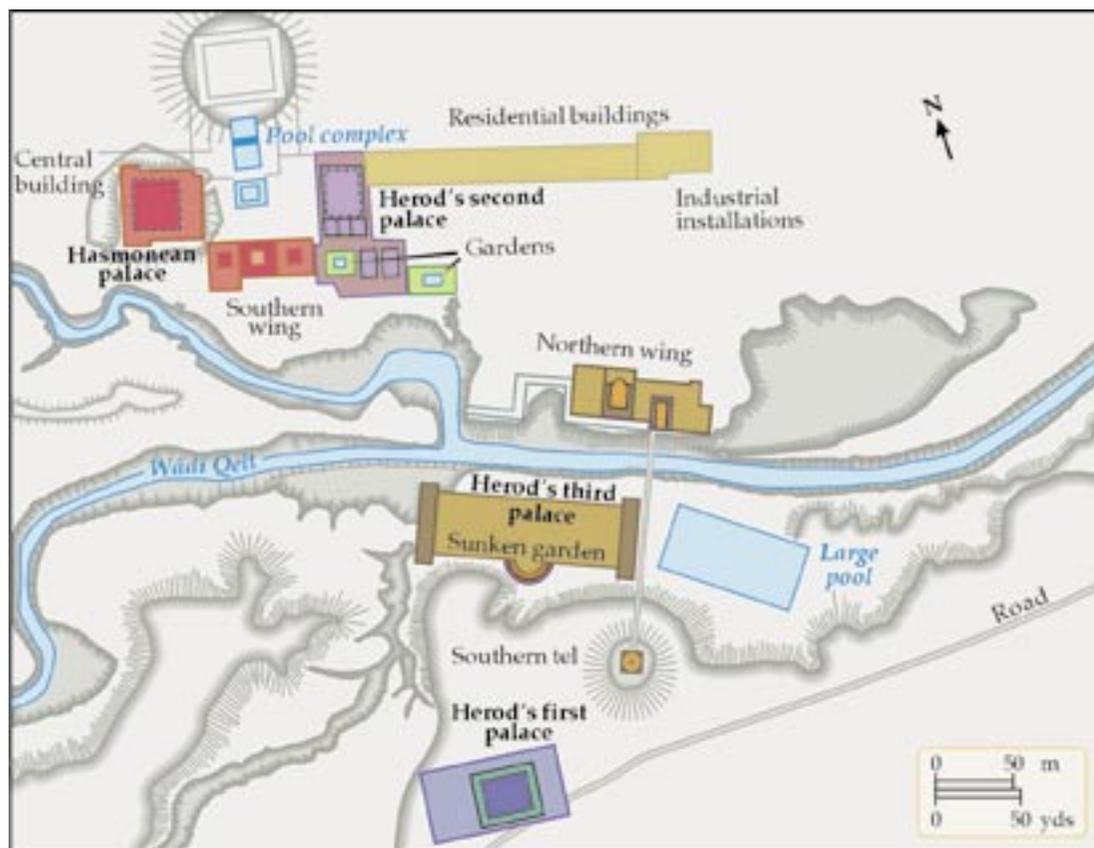
## HEROD’S BUILDING PROJECTS

Herod possesses few rivals for the monumental achievements of his building projects. Most of these were carried out during the golden years of his rule, 25 to 13 BCE (Schürer, Vermes and Millar 1973 1:296; Richardson 1999:174–215). These years were ones of relative political stability in which Herod was able to focus his resources to demonstrate that he was worthy of the trust Rome had placed in him. Indeed, the scale of his efforts seems intended to impress his Roman benefactors. It should thus be no surprise that Herod ascribed the names of Mark Antony, Caesar Augustus and Marcus Agrippas to buildings and cities he constructed throughout his kingdom.

Herod’s architectural endeavors extended from Idumea to Epirus in western Greece (Richardson 1999: 175). Nevertheless, he lavished most of his efforts on Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and cities on the Mediterranean coast. The writings of Josephus are the primary historical witness to Herod’s efforts. Epigraphical evidence and archaeological investigations during the twentieth century have likewise provided details about Herod’s building projects (Netzer 1981: 1:48–61; Richardson 1999:174–215; Chancey and Porter 2001:164–202).



Harem el-Khalil (Cave of Machpelah) in Hebron. (NEAEHL)



Plan of Roman Jericho (Tulul Abū el-ʿAlayiq).

Herod’s contributions included new settlements (e.g. Phasaelis, Antipatris) and the transformation of previous Hellenistic villages into full-fledged cities (e.g. Caesarea, Sebaste). He also strengthened fortifications in the Judean wilderness that lined the eastern frontiers of his kingdom (Alexandrión, Cypros, Doq, Hyrcania, Masada, Macherus; Tsafir 1982:120–145). One of the puzzling omissions in Herod’s efforts is the relative absence of his building efforts in Galilee. He began his political career as the governor of Galilee. Yet, the king left few monuments to commemorate his beginnings. Equally remarkable is the lack of Herodian fortifications in Galilee, which would seem to challenge the repeated perception that Galilee was a hotbed of political dissent during the reign of Herod.

**Jericho.** Herod spared no expense in the construction of elaborate palaces throughout his kingdom. In Jericho he followed the lead of the Hasmoneans, building elaborate winter palaces along Wādī Qelt (Netzer 1993a). Netzer has identified three stages of Herodian construction. In 35 BCE Herod built a palace south of Wādī Qelt and west of Tulul Abū el-ʿAlayiq, while the Hasmonean palaces remained in use. His palace contained bathing installations and a peristyle courtyard. In recent excavations of Herod’s palace at Jericho, the archaeologists uncovered a stepped pool with an adjoining pool lacking steps. The installation’s style matched that of the ritual immersion baths (*mikvaʿot*) discovered in the Hasmonean palace at Jericho. This comes as little surprise, since Herod’s wife belonged to the Hasmonean clan. However, as Netzer remarks, what is exceptional about the mikveh in Herod’s palace at Jericho is that it is the only one found in a Herodian palace that was accompanied with an *otzar* (“reservoir”; Netzer 2001a:41).

The king’s initial, modest palace at Jericho survived the devastating earthquake in 31 BCE, but the nearby palaces of his predecessors did

not. The second phase of Herod’s winter palaces was built on the ruins of these Hasmonean buildings (Netzer 2001a:43–47). Yet, not everything was destroyed. In a measure of irony that only Herod could fully appreciate, the large Hasmonean swimming pools, in which he had conspired to have the young Aristobulus drowned, survived the earthquake and were integrated into Herod’s renovations. This palace included a peristyle courtyard and Roman-style bathhouse typical of Herod’s residences. It also included a winepress and columbarium (dovecote) to provide for the dining in Herod’s triclinium hall.

The final phase of Herod’s palace in Jericho was the largest and most ornate. Concrete walls were faced with Roman-style plastering, *opus reticulatum* and *opus quadratum*, perhaps indicating the direct involvement of Roman builders and architects in the construction (Netzer 2001a:48).

The final phase of Herod’s building at Jericho was his largest and most daring effort there. The palace spanned both sides of the Wādī Qelt, and with the exception of the pool, all of its structures were aligned with the winter streambed. A bridge led from the southern side of the ravine where Herod had constructed a sunken garden and pool below the high tel. The northern wing of the palace had a large reception hall, rooms and, typically for a Herodian palace, a Roman-style bathing complex (cf. Netzer 2001a:49–50).

As indicated, to the south of Wādī Qelt were three wings to Herod’s new palace. A large sunken garden was framed by a rectangular structure and oriented to parallel the wadi. To the east of the gardens was a large pool measuring 295 by 138 feet (90 by 42 m). The scale of the pool has led excavators to suggest its use for swimming and boating, and competition associated with these sports.

Excavations carried out on the southern



View of Masada, looking southwest. (photo Garo Nalbandian)

tel, Tulul Abū el-ʿAlayiq, confirmed that the structures on the summit belonged to Herod's third palace at Jericho. Crossing the bridge that spanned Wādī Qelt, one ascended the staircase to the top of an artificial mound. On it was constructed an impressive structure with a cistern and bathhouse in its basement. The structure itself consisted of a round hall built in a *tholos* shape with semicircular exedrae on four corners. A porticoed porch faced north looking over the gardens, wadi and lower palace.

What struck the excavators was the considerable effort afforded in the construction of the artificial mound and staircase to access a single structure. They surmised that the round structure perched upon the artificial mound was intended to serve as a second reception hall. Its height gave it a commanding view over the nearby palm trees towards the surrounding plain of Jericho. Here Herod entertained his guests in similar fashion to his residence at Masada with wonderful vistas and baths (cf. Netzer 2001a:60).

**Masada.** Herod's development of a preceding



Masada.

Hasmonean presence is also found at Masada. According to Josephus, fortifications were already present at Masada during the Hasmonean period (*War* 7:285). Herod was sent there by Hyrcanus to remove rebels who had taken Masada and other fortresses (τὰ προῦ πύα) in the country (*War* 1:237–238; *Ant.* 14:296–298). Later, Herod returned to Masada to leave his family protected on the summit, when he fled the country for Petra and then Rome in 40 BCE.

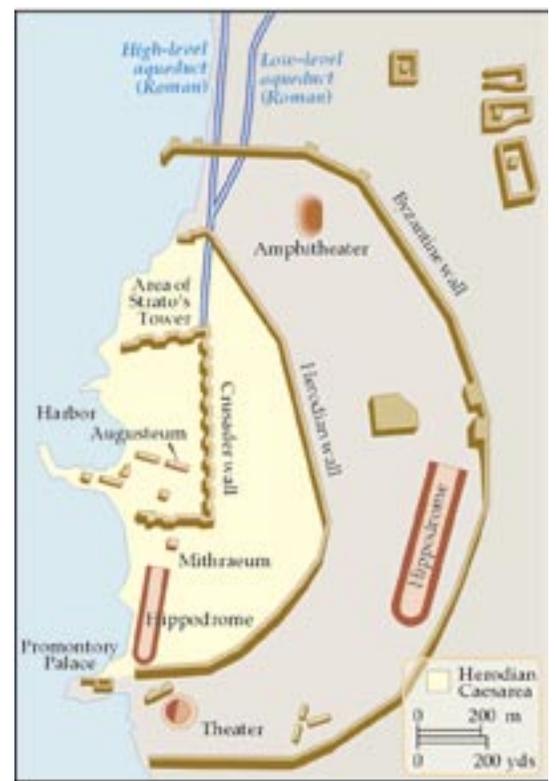
Notwithstanding Josephus' testimony, identification of pre-Herodian construction on Masada has been elusive. It was once thought that the early phase of construction at Masada should be identified with the Western Palace. However, soundings in 1989 were unable to confirm this notion (Netzer 2001a:81). To date no structures from the pre-Herodian period have been identified (Netzer 1993b:979).

Netzer suggests, instead, three phases of Herodian construction at Masada. The earliest construction seems to have coincided with the king's consolidation of power and fortifications in 35 BCE. The second phase consisted of the extensive palace complex on the northern end of the mountain. The final phase of building at Masada primarily entailed casemate walls and some storage facilities.

The three-tiered northern palace provided a magnificent view north towards En-gedi. "The upper terrace served both as sleeping quarters and for reception purposes" (Netzer 2001a:90). Access between the terraces was through a staircase on the western side of the mountain. About 65 feet (20 m) below the upper terrace, the only remnants to be seen from the middle terrace are the foundations laid in concentric circles. Here was "a reception hall, resembling a *tholos*, which was surrounded by a portico of columns" (Netzer 2001a:92). Adjacent to the hall were two rooms where there was a stepped pool, apparently the remains of a mikveh. The staircase continued down to the lowest terrace, the best preserved of the three. It consisted of a square courtyard surrounded by porticoes.

On the eastern edge of the lower terrace, a staircase led to a small bathhouse. It possessed the expected components: a *calidarium* (hot room) built above a heating chamber (*hypocaust*), a *tepidarium* (warm room), and a cold plunge bath (*frigidarium*). The presence of this and other bathing installations at Masada stand in contrast to the arid setting on the summit. An obvious challenge for any residence on Masada was the lack of water. A sophisticated water-collection system (*War* 7:291) diverted winter rains from nearby wadis and channeled them into lower cisterns. These waters were then transported to reservoirs on the summit (Netzer 1993b:975). The water storage capacity is remarkable with the lower cisterns alone estimated to have a capacity of 40,000 cubic meters.

**Caesarea.** While Herod's construction at Jericho and Masada followed the Hasmoneans, such was not the case in Caesarea and Sebaste. These were cities indebted to Herod for their founding. Augustus awarded Strato's Tower to Herod in 31 BCE. Almost ten years later the king transformed the Hellenistic village into a major port. He built extensively in the city (22–10 BCE) and the adjoining harbor that he named Sebastos.



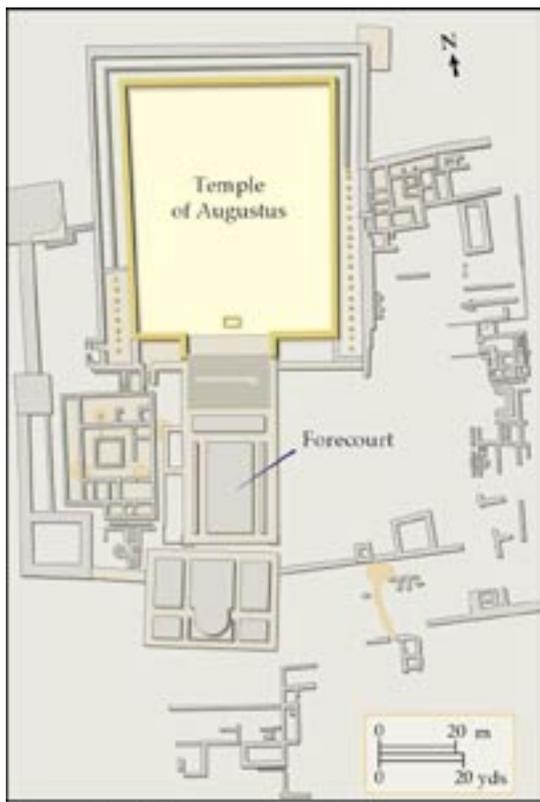
Caesarea.

Caesarea was a well-planned city with a Hippodamian grid street plan and installations typical of a Greco-Roman *polis*, including a theater, amphitheater and agora. Josephus preserves a detailed description of Herod's efforts at Caesarea (*Ant.* 15:331–341; 16:136–141; *War* 1:408–414). The historian lavished particular praise on Herod's construction of the harbor, the size of which exceeded the legendary port of Piraeus in Athens. Overlooking the harbor and perched upon a vaulted platform, Herod erected a temple in honor of the goddess Roma and Caesar Augustus.

To the west of the theater and at the southern end of a hippodrome, Herod built his Promontory Palace (Netzer 2001a:117–122). As with the other Herodian palaces, it included Roman-style baths. What is uncommon in this palace is that the *frigidarium* (cold plunge bath) served as the architectural focal point for the palace. A large peristyle colonnaded courtyard surrounded a freshwater pool cut into the *kurkar* sandstone on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. The palace was beautifully decorated with extensive mosaic floors some of which were uncovered intact. Although it is not the only *villa maritima* on the Mediterranean, its spectacular location on a promontory projection and surrounded on three sides by the sea makes it one of the most impressive. Similar to Herod's royal residence in Jerusalem, the Promontory Palace in Caesarea would later become the residence for the Roman governors of the province of Judea (cf. πραιτώριον: Acts 23:35; Mk 15:16; Benoit 1976: 87–89).

**Sebaste (Samaria).** Caesarea served as the seaward outlet for the Herodian city of Sebaste, built upon the ancient ruins of biblical Samaria (1 Kgs 16:23–24). Josephus describes Herod's contributions to Sebaste in his record of how the king honored his Roman benefactors.

He was not content, however, to commemorate his patrons' names by palaces only; his munificence extended to the creation of whole cities. In the district of Samaria he built a town enclosed within magnificent walls twenty furlongs in



Sebaste—Temple of Augustus enclosure.

length, introduced into it six thousand colonists, and gave them allotments of highly productive land. In the center of this settlement he erected a massive temple, enclosed in ground, a furlong and a half in length consecrated to Caesar; while he named the town itself Sebaste [i.e. the Greek equivalent to Augustus]. (War 1:403)

Archaeological excavations have uncovered the remains of Herod's building. Two towers dating from the time of Herod protected the city gate to the west. Built upon Hellenistic foundations, these towers are likely part of the walled fortifications mentioned by Josephus. Moreover, columns can still be seen from the colonnaded street that stretch over 875 yards (800 m) across the Herodian city.

On the western edge of the acropolis stood the Augusteum, the second of three (Caesarea, Sebaste, Paneas [cf. Jacobson 2002:18–27, 60]) temples built in honor of the Roman emperor. The vantage from the summit provides an unimpeded view of the Mediterranean Sea. The sanctuary "consisted of the temple building proper (35 by 24 m) and a large forecourt, both of which were oriented on a single south-north axis" (Avigad 1993b:1307). Remains from a stadium and forum may likewise point us to the early Roman development of Sebaste.

**Herodium.** The largest and most impressive of Herod's palaces was that of Herodium (Jebel Fureidis; Foerster 1993:618–626; Netzer 2001a:98–116). Josephus reports that Herod built the site to memorialize his victory over those pursuing him in his flight from Antigonos and the Parthians in 40 BCE (Ant. 14:359–360, 15:323–325; War 1:265). Herodium also served as the capital of the toparchy (War 3:55; Pliny Nat. Hist. 5.70) and the location for Herod's mausoleum (Netzer 2001a:114–116; Magness 2001:43–46; Richardson 1999:20).

Herod's construction at Herodium added to the height of an existing hill with concentric supporting walls and four towers. The increased height of the hill apparently was intended so that it could be seen from the environs of Jerusalem. On its summit Herod built his Upper Palace.

The palace rooms at the top of the mountain (referred to by archaeologists as Upper Herodium), which include a triclinium, a bathhouse, a peristyle garden, were located in a depression within the inner circular wall. (Magness 2001:43)

At the base of the hill Herod built a complex of buildings constructed around a colonnaded pool and formal gardens (Netzer 2001a:107–116). Herod's palatial residence at Herodium is one of the largest in the Roman world, and here the king entertained Marcus Agrippas on his visit to Judea in 15 BCE (Ant. 16:12–13). Although located in an arid setting, like his other desert palaces, Herodium did not lack an ample supply of water. Aqueducts brought water from springs adjacent to Solomon's Pools (cf. War 1:420).

Josephus records that Herod was buried at Herodium, but his tomb has yet to be discovered (Ant. 17:199; War 1:673). Netzer concludes that while the location of Herod's tomb remains unknown, it was likely situated among the buildings of Lower Herodium. He reasons that issues of ritual purity would not have tolerated Herod's burial in the residence of Upper Herodium (Netzer 2001a:116). Magness has countered that the absence of fine wares in Upper Herodium after Herod's death may suggest its discontinued use as a residence and remove the obstacle to Herod's burial there (Magness 2001:45). Certain location for the burial place of Herod must await further investigation.

**Jerusalem.** Herod's architectural contribution to the city of Jerusalem left a lasting imprint on the shape of the city (Ben-Dov 2002:103–126). The Hasmoneans had earlier restored the walls of Jerusalem and once again incorporated the western hill into the walled city. The line of their wall approximated the earlier defensive efforts of Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:5; Avigad 1993a:729). Inadvertently, restoration by the Hasmoneans of walls on a line close to their previous course likely contributed to the confusion witnessed in the first century regarding the size of Jerusalem during the time of David. Josephus seems to have mistakenly thought that David's conquest of the Jebusite city included the western hill (cf. Ant. 7:64–65; War 5:137). This confusion over the size and development of Jerusalem would lead in the late Roman and Byzantine periods to the mistaken application of the biblical toponym "Mount Zion" to the western hill (e.g. Eus. Onom. 74:19; Notley-Safrai 2005:74).

Archaeologists are divided regarding



Herodium—plan of the palace-fortress.



Herodium: view of the mountain palace-fortress from Lower Herodium. (NEAEHL)

responsibility for the construction of what Josephus calls the Second Wall (Geva 1993:736). Herod or his Hasmonean predecessors (cf. Ant. 14:476) added a wall that enclosed the northern market area. Although the precise line of the Second Wall has yet to be determined, its beginning and end points are described by Josephus:

The Second Wall took its beginning from that gate which they called "Gennath," which belonged to the first wall; it only encompassed the northern quarter of the city, and reached as far as the tower Antonia. (War 5:146)

Herod's Jerusalem was a bicameral city. On both the eastern and western hills Herod was responsible for the construction of monumental enclosures fortified on their northern exposures. Very little remains of Herod's royal palace on the western hill in the vicinity of today's Citadel and the Armenian Seminary in the Old City of Jerusalem (Bahat and Broshi 1976:55–56). Only the foundations have been identified from what Josephus describes as a remarkable structure (Netzer 2001a:125–128).

[Herod's] own palace, which he erected in the Upper City, comprised two most spacious and beautiful buildings, with which the Temple itself bore no comparison; these he named after his friends, the one Caesareum and the other Agrippaeum. (War 1:402; cf. Ant. 15:318)

The two buildings named for Herod's benefactors housed his *triclinia* and rooms for sleeping. They looked out on open-air courts with gardens and pools.

All around were many circular cloisters, leading one into another, the columns in each being different, and their open courts all of greensward; there were groves of various trees intersected by long walks, which were bordered by deep canals, and ponds everywhere studded with bronze figures through which the water was discharged and around the streams were numerous cots for tame pigeons. (War 5:180–181)

Three monumental towers named for Hippias, Phasael and Mariamme (War 5:164–171) guarded the northern entrance into Herod's royal palace. The lower portions of one of Herod's towers can still be seen today at the Citadel near Jaffa Gate.

Herod's greatest architectural achievement was the renovation and expansion of the Jerusalem Temple. It may perhaps signify something of Herod's delicate balance between Rome and the Jewish nation that his construction of three temples in honor of Caesar Augustus at Caesarea, Sebaste and Paneas [Caesarea Philippi] was matched by monumental sanctuaries at three sites Jewish tradition marked to be significant in the life of Abraham, father of the nation: Mamre, Hebron and Jerusalem. All



Northern pilaster wall of the Herodian enclosure at Mamre (Ramet el-Khalil). (NEAEHL)

three sanctuaries were constructed employing a Roman-style temenos plan (Ball 2001:318–321) incorporating a walled enclosure and open-air precincts with a sanctuary built over the site of particular sanctity.

It is difficult to distinguish Herod's efforts at Mamre (Ramet el-Khalil; Tsafir, di Segni and Green 1994: 177–187). Yet, the archaeologists have remarked on the similarity between the Herodian-style stone masonry found *in situ* at Mamre and that seen in the Herodian Machpelah in Hebron, a structure that stands mostly intact. "It is significant that these stones were found *in situ* above the large stones of the retaining walls. The pilasters resemble those of the Cave of Machpelah both in width and in the distance between them" (Magen 1993:941). The pilasters decorating the upper section of the walls of the Machpelah in Hebron and Mamre are also important for our understanding of the architectural style of the upper walls surrounding the Temple Mount that were destroyed in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Outside of the northern wall of the Temple Mount, Herod strengthened the fortification known previously as the Baris (Βάρης) and renamed it Antonia (War 1:118) after his early benefactor, Mark Antony (Ant. 15:409). The topography of the eastern hill limited Herod's ability to expand the area of the Temple precincts. The severity of the slope to the east into the Kidron Valley prevented expansion in that direction. Consequently, the line of the eastern wall predates Herod. The antiquity of the eastern wall may have given rise to the popular name, Solomon's Portico, attributed to the colonnaded portico on the eastern side of the Temple precincts (Acts 5:12). Evidence of Herod's extension of the eastern wall southward can be seen in "the Seam" c. 100 feet (32 m) north of the southeastern corner of the Temple Mount.

Herod had to construct an artificial elevated platform to support the expanded precincts. With these modifications, Herod was able to increase significantly the surface area of the enclosed Temple Mount (cf. War 1:401).

The Herodian Temple Mount enclosure was shaped like a rectangle with sides of unequal length. The length of the western (and longest) wall is 485 m; the eastern wall is 470 m long; the northern wall is 315 m long; and the southern (and shortest) wall is only 280 m long. . . . (Geva 1993b:737)

Nevertheless, it seems that for ritual purposes Herod's expanded area was never reckoned according to Jewish law (cf. m. Mid. 2:1).

According to Josephus, Herod built a Royal Stoa the width of the platform along the southern end. Recent excavations have discovered that this stoa was accessed from a staircase supported by one of the largest arches in the classical world, "Robinson's Arch," named after the nineteenth-century explorer who discovered it (Robinson and Smith 1856: 1:287; Ben-Dov 1982:121–133). Three other gates provided access to the platform from the direction of the upper city. However, the primary means of access for pilgrims was to ascend the monumental staircase and to enter the Huldah Gates on the southern face of the Temple Mount. The needs of ritual purity for pilgrims ascending to the Temple led to the construction of numerous ritual bathing installations near the Huldah Gates.

Of course, the jewel in the crown of Herod's building in Jerusalem was the Temple itself. Josephus praises Herod's efforts (Ant. 15:391–420). Even the Talmud, the repository of those who were hardly Herod's supporters, remarked, "He who has not seen the Temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building" (b. Bab. Bat. 4a). Today scholars disagree concerning the specifics of Herod's Temple. This is understandable, because the ancient literary witnesses differ. Since a scientific archaeological investigation of the Temple Mount has never been conducted, those differences remain unresolved.

## THE DECLINING YEARS OF HEROD

Herod's domestic troubles overshadowed his reign. In his waning years they culminated in a series of tragic events. The king executed his beloved wife Mariamme in 29 BCE on charges of infidelity (Ant. 15:232–236; War 1:438–443). A few years later he also put to death his mother-in-law, Alexandra (Ant. 15:247–252). Herod's guilt over Mariamme's death continued to haunt him. It also poisoned his relationship with his two sons by Mariamme, Alexander and Aristobulus. They had spent six years being educated in Rome, and the popular expectation was that these sons born into the Hasmonean line would succeed Herod on the throne. In 17 BCE Herod traveled to Rome to bring his sons back to Judea.

Their return was not welcomed by everyone. Herod's sister, Salome, had been at the center of the allegations against Mariamme (Ant. 15:213, 231). She probably had a right to be concerned for her own welfare should the sons of the deceased queen take the throne. Herod's brother, Pheroras, and the king's eldest son, Antipater, likewise were suspicious of the boys' return. Years of intrigues, accusations, and machinations ensued between the parties. The domestic strife in Herod's court became so bad that even Augustus had to intervene in an attempt to bring reconciliation.

Three years before Herod's death, Alexander and Aristobulus were brought before a tribunal in Syria where they were condemned to death.



The division of Herod's kingdom, 4 BCE to 6 CE.



Plan of Roman Gerasa.

They were brought to Sebaste where they were executed by strangulation and their bodies buried at the fortress of Alexandrion (*Ant.* 16:356–394; *War* 2:101–110). Hope for a return to the Hasmonean dynasty died with the two sons, and now the focus of succession fell to Herod's oldest son, Antipater. Yet, Herod had other sons, and Antipater's position was not secure. His alliance with his uncle Pheroras was later perceived as sedition, and upon Pheroras' death, accusations were laid against Antipater.

### HEROD'S DEATH AND THE DIVISION OF HIS KINGDOM

In the meantime, Herod's health declined. He attempted to get relief from the hot springs of Callirrhoe (Καλλιρρόη; *War* 1:657; *Ant.* 17:171; *Pliny Nat. Hist.* 5.16; *Avi-Yonah* 1954:40). Yet, the mineral springs brought little relief. Premature rumors of Herod's death were constant through the kingdom. Josephus records one event when two sages, upon hearing of Herod's passing, led the pulling down of an eagle Herod had erected over a gate of the Temple—an offense to the Jewish prohibition against graven images (*Ant.* 17:151; *War* 1:651). Although frail, the king had enough strength to oversee their execution.

In his last days, Herod received permission from the emperor to execute Antipater. He executed his eldest son a mere five days before his own death (*Ant.* 17:191). Josephus likewise reports that Herod realized there would be little mourning at his death. So, he arrested the leading men of the country and instructed Salome that they should be executed upon his death in order to assure the mourning of the nation (*Ant.* 17:174–175). She would later rescind that order (*Ant.* 17:193).

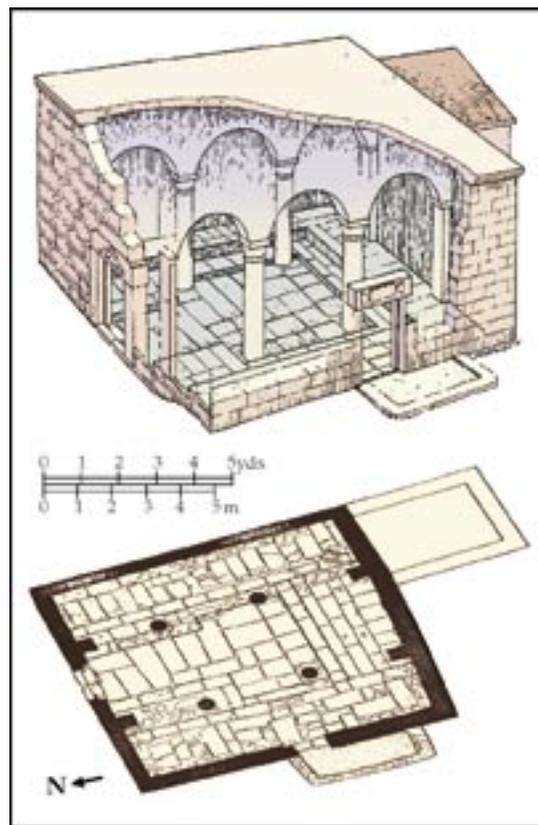
Herod died in 4 BCE. Josephus records a regal funeral procession from Jericho to Herodium where the king's body was laid to rest (*Ant.* 17:196–199). In his last days Herod changed his will a final time (*Ant.* 17:188–189). He requested from Caesar that his kingdom be divided among his three surviving sons. The king nominated Archelaus to be ethnarch and given the territories of Judea, Idumea and Samaria. The eldest son also received the two great cities founded by Herod, Caesarea and Sebaste.

Herod Antipas was designated tetrarch and given Galilee and Perea. Herod Philip was also designated tetrarch. He received the lands on the northeastern edge of his father's kingdom: Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Gaulanitis, Paneas and the Ulatha region. Salome was left in the care of Archelaus. For her years of steadfast faithfulness, she was granted the cities of Jamnia, Azotus, on the coastal plain, and Phasaelis, in the Jordan Valley.

### EXCURSUS 21.1 ROMAN PERIOD

Like the Greeks before them, Rome used the cities as a means to control its empire (cf. Excursus 17.1). Therefore, as the Roman Empire expanded eastward, the already Hellenized cities were given even more impetus to take on Greco-Roman characteristics. The Hippodamian city plan was adapted to take on a new feature, the intersection of the city by a major colonnaded street, the *cardo*, intersected at right angles by a secondary major axis, the *decumanus*. These streets that were lined with shops became the commercial center of the city. Often, by the intersection of these two major arteries was a *capitolium*, in front of which was the *forum*, the gathering place for whatever business city residents needed to carry out. In addition, the temple was often set apart from the rest of the city and elevated on a platform, such as the sanctuary of Heliopolis at Baalbek. At the entrance to the city, it was also customary to have a triumphal arch, as can be seen at Gerasa. After the reign of Augustus, there was a proliferation of places for leisure, such as theaters, amphitheaters, hippodromes, and bathhouses. The latter often required a water supply exceeding that which was locally available, so that extensive effort was put into the construction of aqueducts, such as the 45-mile- (75-km-) long one at Apamea. In addition to its continued focus on major cities, the Roman Empire also developed a network of paved roads well marked by milestones. The *Via Nova Trajana* linking the Red Sea to Syria is one such example. All of these Roman elements can be found in Palestine, some dating back to as early as the reign of Herod the Great. Without attempting to survey all of his construction projects, a comparison of his efforts in Caesarea to those in Jerusalem reveals his ability to merge the best of Rome with Jewish religious sensitivities when necessary (cf. *supra*). This was copied by other Jerusalem aristocrats, possibly even priests, whose residences have been uncovered in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. There, the remains of large mansions elaborately decorated in Roman style have been unearthed, all of which were careful not to breach Jewish law, even containing several *miqva'ot* or ritual baths. Later, this sharp distinction will be lost, as in Sepphoris, where, although there was a continued significant Jewish presence, the houses reveal mosaics dealing with pagan themes. This was not the case in Caesarea, which from the beginning boasted one of three temples built by Herod in honor of Caesar Augustus, a direct affront to Jewish sensitivities (the other two being at Sebaste and Paneas). Caesarea is also the site of the oldest known theater in Palestine, that would soon be followed by those at Ascalon, Scythopolis, Gerasa, Neapolis, Samaria-Sebaste, Philadelphia, Petra, and others. Similarly, hippodromes are known from Gerasa, Caesarea, Neapolis and Jericho. Scythopolis, Caesarea, Neapolis, and Eleutheropolis also boasted amphitheaters. Roman bathhouses were common, such as the ones at Tiberias, Hammath Gader, Scythopolis, Caesarea, Gerasa, but also in much smaller towns such as Philotera (Umm Riḥan).

Over 900 miles (1,500 km) of Roman roads were built in Palestine beginning in the second half of the first century CE, both with an eye to connect to the neighboring lands and to meet more local administrative and military needs. Thus, in addition to four north-south arteries, six highways are known to have converged on Jerusalem where the Tenth Legion



Plan and reconstruction of synagogue at Kiriath-sepher, first century CE.

Fretensis was stationed, with another important junction at Legio, in the western Jezreel Valley, where the Second Legion Traiana was encamped and eventually succeeded by the Sixth Legion Ferrata. Aqueducts providing water to various cities have been traced, the most impressive being those connected to Jerusalem. The oldest one is 50 miles (80 km) long and apparently dates back to Herod's time, although it was upgraded by the Tenth Legion in the second century CE. More impressive today are the remains of the three aqueducts bringing water to Caesarea, and the elaborate waterworks at Sepphoris.

Yet while archaeology testifies to the spread of Roman culture, it also bears witness to a counter-phenomenon: the proliferation of synagogues. To date, the earliest archaeological evidence comes from the island of Delos, dating to the late second or early first century BCE. In Palestine, remains of synagogues predating the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE have been identified at Gamala, Masada, Herodium, Kiriath-sepher, Modiin, and possibly at Jericho and Khirbet 'Itri. The Theodotos Inscription found in Jerusalem may also bear witness to the Synagogue of the Freedmen mentioned in Acts 6:9. Post-70 CE, over a hundred synagogues have been identified, all dating from the third century CE onward. The earliest are those in Nabratein, Khirbet Shema<sup>c</sup>, Gush Halav, and Meron. But even more have been found in the Diaspora: at Sardis, Priene, possibly Miletus and Pergamum in Asia Minor, not to overlook Dura-Europos in Syria. While the origins of such structures are still unclear, both Greek and Roman influences have been suggested, as the architecture of individual synagogues sometimes resembles elements from the *ekklesiasticon*, the *bouleuterion*, the *basilica*, or even the *triclinium*. For the Christian community, meeting places are not as easily identifiable, initially because Christians originally worshiped together with other Jews in the synagogues, then because they gathered in house churches or *domus ecclesiae* which are not readily identifiable, except possibly for the structure under the later octagonal church at Capernaum. But the Roman world would take on a much different character with Constantine's conversion and the beginning of the Byzantine period.