

The World of the Herods

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THE IDEAL CITY IN THE EYES OF HEROD THE GREAT

Ehud Netzer

In contrast to the abundance of data concerning palaces, temples, fortresses, and entertainment edifices, town planning in Herod's kingdom remains somewhat more obscure. On the other hand, there should be no doubt that a builder like Herod must have had his own principles and desires in this field. We shall first survey the various cities in Herod's realm that featured elements of town planning (Sebaste, Jerusalem, Caesarea and Antipatris), and then summarize the discussion, after a brief study of the tentative place of Herodium as an ideal city in the eyes of Herod.

SAMARIA/SEBASTE

As we can learn from Josephus (*Ant.* 15.298; *War* 1.403), Sebaste, the former capital of the Israelite kingdom and a district centre in later periods, was the first place to be developed by Herod as a proper city (Fig. 1):

He surrounded the city with a strong wall, using the steep slope of the place as a means of strengthening it. And he enclosed an area that was not of the same size as that of the former city but did not fall short of that of the most renowned cities, for it was twenty stades (in circumference). Within it, at its centre, he consecrated a precinct of one and a half stades (in circumference), which was adorned in a variety of ways, and in it he erected a temple, which in size and beauty was among the most renowned. The various parts of the city he also adorned in a variety of ways, and seeing the necessity of security, he made it a first class fortress by strengthening its outer walls.

In the district of Samaria he built a town enclosed within magnificent walls twenty furlongs in length, introduced into it six thousand colonists, and gave them allotments of highly productive land. In the centre of this settlement he erected a massive temple, enclosed in ground, a furlong and a half in length, consecrated to Caesar [Augustus]; while he named the town itself Sebaste.

It seems that at Sebaste first priority was given to the re-planning of the acropolis (c. 220 x 120 m in size), which had been the focal point of activity since the days of the Israelite kingdom. Herod's major effort here was invested in the construction of a pagan temple and the fortifications into which its precinct was integrated.

Only the foundations of the temple proper and its forecourt have survived.¹ The present author's restoration of the temple,² features a tentative plan of the temple

1 In the forecourt, some of the substructures' floors below the missing colonnades have survived (Netzer 1987, 97–100).

2 Netzer 1987, 100–4.

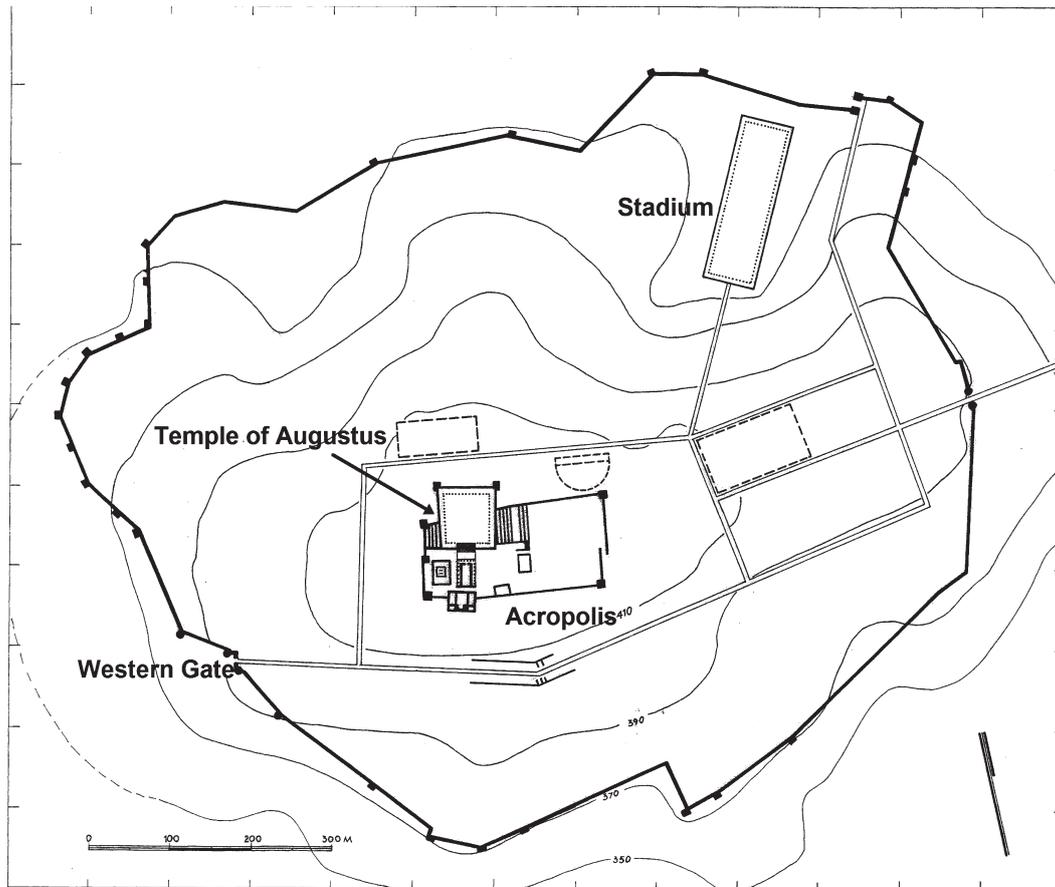


Fig. 1: A tentative plan of Samaria-Sebaste in the reign of Herod.

itself, the double colonnades surrounding the forecourt, and a proposed monumental stair-bridge based on arches (Fig. 2), similar to the stair-bridge ('Robinson Arch') that was built by Herod at the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount, as much as the one that led up to the round reception hall on top of the 'Southern Tell' in Herod's third palace in Jericho.³ Although the temple formed part of the acropolis, the stair-bridge connected it directly with the city proper, a situation somewhat similar to that of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Also revealed at the southern edge of the acropolis were some public and/or royal edifices which flanked the temple: storerooms; a domus (The 'Atrium House' apparently the priest's house?),⁴ and a basilica (the 'Apsidal Building'⁵ perhaps a bathhouse).⁶

In the town itself, around the acropolis, Herod restored the city wall (c. 3480 m long, at least part of which was built along a new course),⁷ and apparently erected some

3 For the bridge-stairway in Jericho, see Netzer 2001, 296, 327.

4 Reisner *et al.* 1924, 180–5.

5 Reisner *et al.* 1924, 180.

6 Barag (1993) has suggested that these structures be regarded as part of Herod's local 'Royal Citadel'. The present writer prefers to define it as a 'fortified compound'.

7 Crowfoot *et al.* 1942, 39–41.

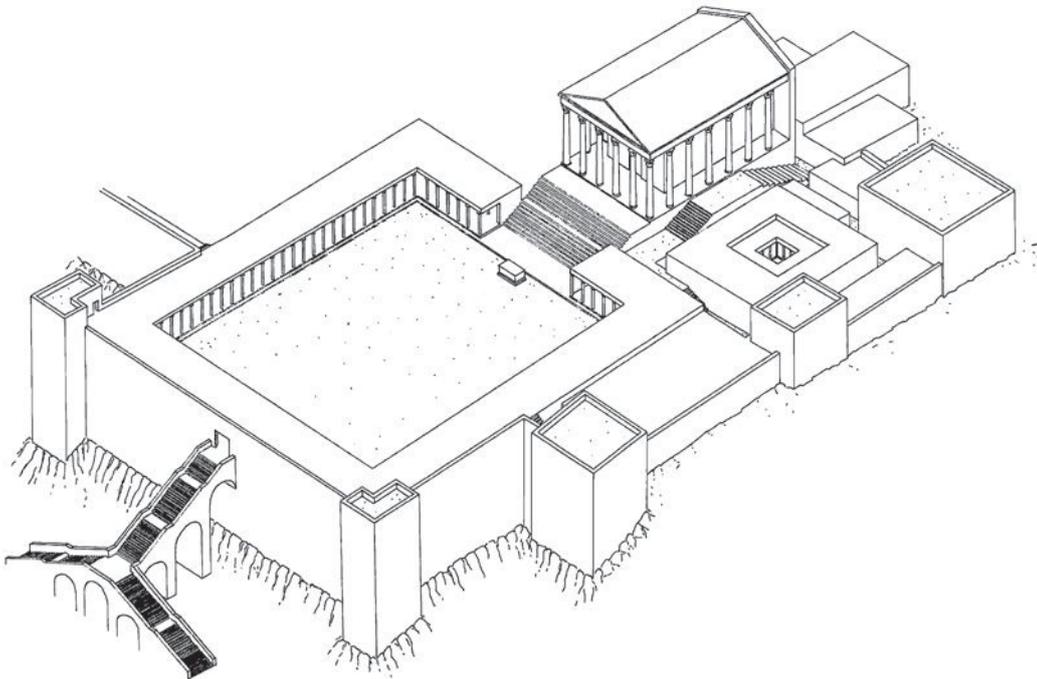


Fig. 2: Isometric view of Augustus Temple, and the adjacent structures, built by Herod at Samaria Sebaste, reconstructed by the present writer (drawn by J. Salzberg).

public buildings, including a stadium. The wall featured round towers as well as square ones. Worthy of note is the western gate, consisting of two round towers (12 m in diameter, 13.2 m apart).⁸ Although Josephus did not provide us specific information about public buildings, the initial phase of the exposed stadium at the northern end of the 'lower city' is dated to Herod's reign and shows fresco decorations that are characteristic of his other building projects.⁹ This stadium (measuring *c.* 210 x 70 m, including the surrounding colonnades, or *c.* 200 x 60 m the inner enclosure) was suitable for athletic contests but too short for horse and chariot races; however, it might have been used for training for such contests. Other tentative public buildings exposed in the lower city (the temple of Kore, a theater, a basilica with an adjacent forum) were built much later, though some of them might have been erected on top of Herodian structures. Other tentative public buildings, yet unrevealed, might have existed elsewhere in the city. In any case, none of the residential areas from Herod's days have yet been uncovered.

Being built on a hilly area, the site did not call for a grid system (parallel and perpendicular streets). What might have replaced such a system was a series of major thoroughfares that connected the city gates on one hand, and flanked or approached the major monuments on the other. (Naturally, the smaller streets linked up with these major ones.) The partially exposed Colonnaded Street, which started at the Herodian city gate on the west and extended along the southern side of the

8 Reisner *et al.* 1924, 199.

9 Fittschen 1996, 140.

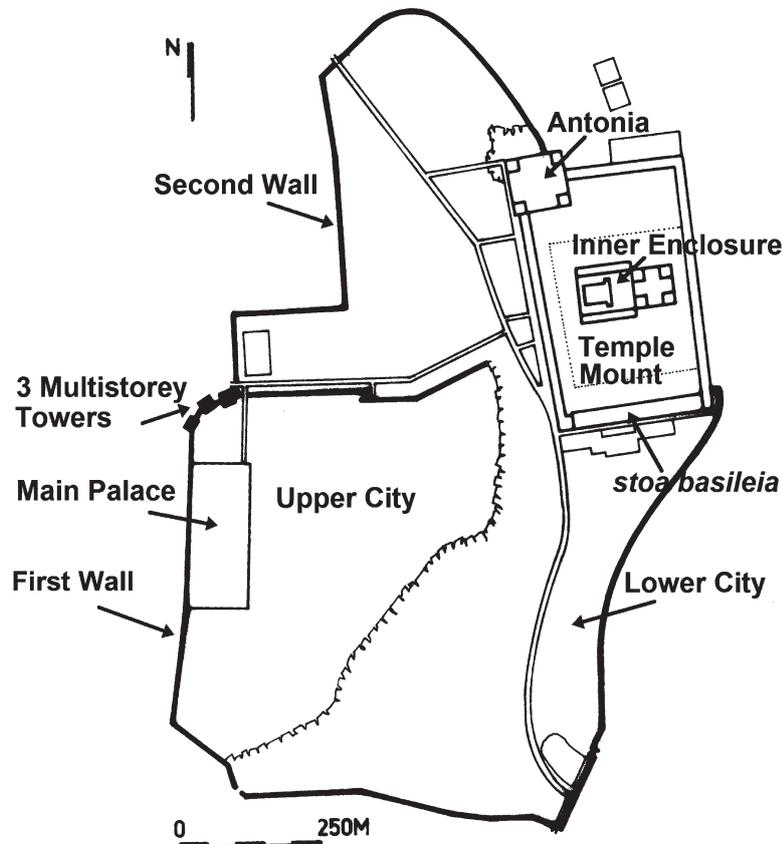


Fig. 3 : A tentative plan (sketch) of Jerusalem in the reign of Herod.

acropolis, is characteristic for such a layout. Although this famous street is Severan in date, it might have followed an earlier Herodian course.

JERUSALEM

It seems plausible that among all the cities within Herod's realm, the appearance of Jerusalem, his capital, had first priority in the king's consciousness (Fig. 3). Here, however, he faced a major difficulty, which did not exist in his other cities: the sociopolitical power wielded by the priests, who were responsible for the intensive daily activity at the Temple. (In particular since the Hasmonaean kings before him, being of a priestly family, had also held the office of high priest, a status that he, a grandson of a convert to Judaism, could not gain.)¹⁰ In this respect, the Antonia constructed relatively early in his reign, was not only a statement of his intentions,

10 He could not have led the service at the Temple or have the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies.

but also occupied the most advantageous strategic point for controlling the city and the Temple in particular.

Like Samaria, Jerusalem was built on a hilly terrain, and here too it was not easy to implement a city plan based on a ‘Hippodamic’ grid system. Another, even more serious obstacle in the implementation of a grid system, even in those areas that were not too steep (such as most of the upper city)¹¹ was the presence of densely built city quarters, which had been erected prior to Herod’s time – a problem that was probably less pronounced at Sebaste, Caesarea and Antipatris. It is even questionable whether the extension of Jerusalem to the north, into the area that was enclosed by the ‘second wall’ during Herod’s day, was planned in a grid system. Here too, the topography is not flat and some earlier buildings might have existed, as in the nearby quarter of Bezetha, ‘fiori la mura’. But we lack the data necessary for a detailed discussion of these matters.

On the other hand, we stand on firmer ground when dealing with a list of illustrious structures and building complexes that were erected by Herod in Jerusalem,¹² not in chronological order: (1) the Temple and the Temple Mount; (2) the Antonia; (3) the main palace; (4) the three towers (Phasaël, Hippicus and Mariamme) adjacent to the main palace; (5) the theater; (6) the hippodrome-stadium.¹³ The locations of Buildings nos. 1–4 are basically known from actual remains as well as literary evidence. Buildings nos. 5 and 6, which most probably stood beyond the city walls, have not yet been located. Another building erected by Herod outside the city walls is a round structure (c. 33 m in diameter), known as the ‘opus reticulatum’ monument, apparently a burial compound for Herod’s kinsmen, which is mentioned twice by Josephus (*War* 5.108, 507), once as “Herod’s monuments” and once as “Herod’s monument”.¹⁴ The Temple together with the Temple Mount (which was dramatically extended by Herod) is not merely another item in the list of Herod’s building projects (Fig. 4). From the architectural and other viewpoints, one may regard it as a ‘city within a city’, in particular if one also includes in this major project the squares, wide streets, bridges, ritual baths and shops that were built to the south and west of the Temple Mount. This ‘holy city’ (covering an area of c. 15 hectares!) comprised: the Antonia; the Temple proper, enclosed by the holy *temenos* which included the court of the priests (‘ZRH), the various offices, built at different levels (LSKWT); the court of the women (‘ZRT NS’M); the Temple Mount (the huge enclosed area around the *temenos*) flanked on three sides by colonnades; the Royal Stoa (*basileios stoa*) at its southern end; and all the above-mentioned structures adjacent to the Temple Mount.

11 No indication of streets in a grid system was revealed in Avigad’s excavations in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem’s Old City. On the contrary, the buildings had various orientations, mostly dictated by the topography. The only tentative example of a planned grid is a major east-west thoroughfare, built on top of an earlier Herodian mansion, which was dated by Avigad (1983, 81–3, 88–97) to the end of Herod’s reign or under Agrippa II.

12 This is aside from repairs to, and extension of, the city walls and the construction of streets and water installations. As to other hypothetical public buildings possibly also built by the king, see below.

13 Humphrey 1996, 121–7.

14 Ben-Arieh & Netzer 1983, 171 and fig. 3.



Fig. 4: The Temple Mount („The Holy City“), part of the model of Jerusalem in the second Temple period now in the Israel Museum; designed by M. Avi-Yonah (photographer, E. Netzer).

The erection of the Royal Stoa was the most extensive building and engineering endeavour in the entire project. The only justification for such an effort was Herod's personal need for an illustrious venue on the Temple Mount where he could be the ultimate authority, a place which the Hasmonaeans who preceded him had not needed, as they served both as kings and high priests.¹⁵

The Temple Mount complex was undoubtedly of key significance in daily life in Jerusalem. Being a constantly active shrine, on such a huge scale, it not only heightened the city's vibrancy and raised its socio-economic level, but even more it contributed to its appearance and glory.

The next major project to influence the city's appearance was the main palace, built on the western edge of the upper city. However, whereas the Temple Mount served as a focus for every Jerusalemite (poor or rich), as well as for every pilgrim who came from other parts of the country and from abroad, the palace apparently was centred on the royal court, friends of the royal family and Jerusalem's aristocracy. Being surrounded by a high wall numerous towers – including the three multi-storied ones to its north – it constituted, no doubt, a visual landmark in the city, a sort of architectural counterbalance to the Temple Mount. The three towers are unique in the classical world, and are good examples of Herod's own approach to architecture. With palatial installations above solid foundations, they might have

¹⁵ The present writer was apparently the first scholar to put forward this viewpoint, so vital for the understanding of the Herodian compound (see Netzer 2001a, 128–31).

been used more for the entertainment of the king and his guests, and as symbols, rather than as means for defence.¹⁶

As to the rest of the city, it seems that much attention was paid to the main thoroughfares. Archaeology has provided ample data relating to the well-paved streets along the western and southern sides of the Temple Mount,¹⁷ as well as to a major street along the Tyropoeon valley. A major east-west thoroughfare probably ran parallel to and to the north of the 'first wall', west of Wilson's Arch.¹⁸ One can imagine the presence of a major street perpendicular to it, leading to Herod's main palace. But there is no archaeological evidence of these and other Herodian thoroughfares.

Naturally, there were other vital needs to be met, such as markets, storerooms, public bathhouses, water installations (such as reservoirs), and fortifications, but here (with the exception of the last mentioned two items) our data with regard to Herod's involvement are meager. We also lack any clear information about official bureaus and places of assembly in the polis tradition, such as Boulai, which more probably existed in Sebaste and Caesarea, being mainly pagan cities (functioning according to the Hellenistic polis system), and not in the Jewish cities or district centres, which had a different administrative organization. Several edifices in the sphere of entertainment (such as the theatre and hippodrome-stadium mentioned by Josephus,¹⁹ and perhaps also gymnasia) were also constructed. (Here, in a way, the real need of the masses was somewhat in conflict with the Hellenised-Romanised trends of Herod and some of the aristocracy.) In any case, with the limited data at hand we can only speculate on the existence and location of most of these facilities.

It is also doubtful whether Herod took the initiative in building, rebuilding or embellishing residential quarters, or even paid much attention to the smaller alleys. This does not mean that there were no changes in the city during Herod's reign as a result of the apparent rise in the standard of living and the emergence of new social circles consisting of the king's friends, army officers and civil servants.

CAESAREA-ON-THE-SEA

In contrast to Sebaste and Jerusalem, it seems that Caesarea, which replaced Strato's Tower, a dilapidated Phoenician town, was Herod's major opportunity to build on a large scale a 'modern' and well-planned city (Fig. 5). Only further excavations will show to what extent the former town was integrated into the new city. At all events, it seems that the grid system of streets, which apparently was first laid out by Herod's

16 Netzer 1981, 79–84.

17 This includes the large plaza south of the Temple Mount, although it was apparently built only after Herod's death.

18 As suggested by Ma'oz (1985, fig. 4). In regard to the general conception concerning the boundaries and walls of the city in Herod's day, the present writer favours the more common one as presented by Bahat (1990, 37–43, 55, map).

19 *Jos. Ant.* 15.268–74; 17.255; *War* 2.44.

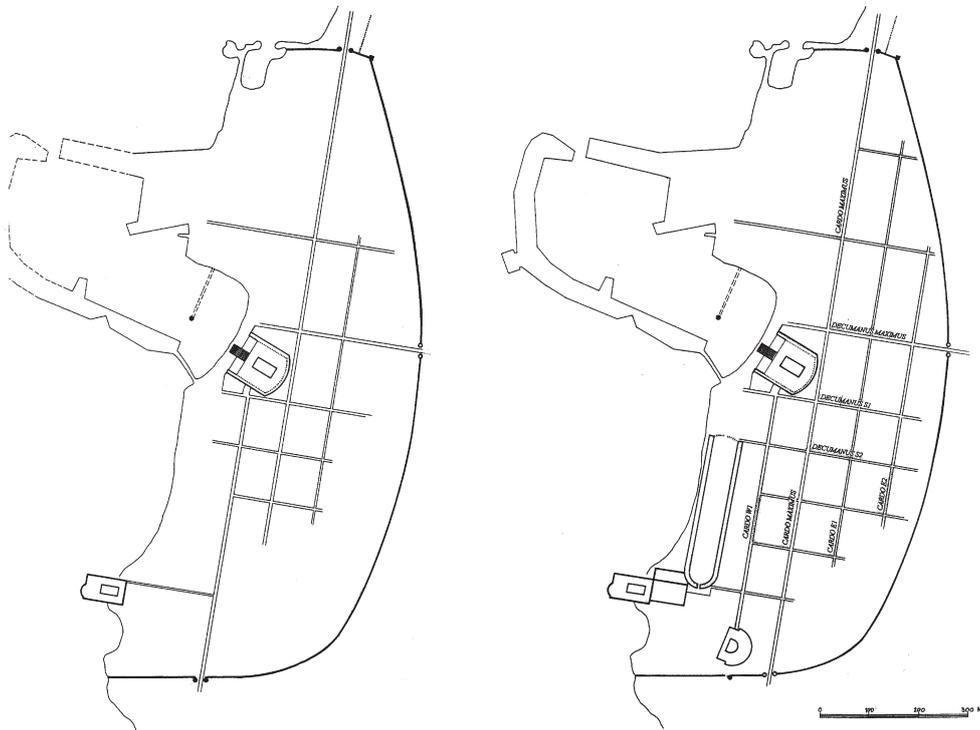


Fig. 5: Left: a tentative plan of Caesarea in the first phase of construction, in Herod's reign. Right: a tentative plan of Caesarea at the end of Herod's reign.

architects, had not existed previously.²⁰ (Archaeologically speaking, even the assumption that the grid system was laid out in Herod's days should await full proof, although most archaeologists who excavated at the site take this for granted.)

Even though Josephus provides no direct description of an 'Hippodamic' urban system in Caesarea, there are allusions to it (*War* 1.414; *Ant.* 15.340):

Abutting the harbour were houses, also of white stone, and upon it converged the streets of the town, laid at equal distances apart.

But below the city the underground passages and sewers cost no less effort than the structures built above them. Of these, some led at equal distances from one another to the harbour and the sea, while one diagonal passage connected all of them, so that the rainwater and the refuse of the inhabitants were easily carried off together.

As a rule, drainage and sewage systems follow the streets in order to facilitate their maintenance or so that changes can be introduced in the system. The last quotation, therefore, also indicates the presence of a street grid system.²¹ The city probably had not only a well-planned drainage-sewage system but with up-to-date water supply system (according to the archaeological remains).²²

20 In theory, it is even possible that a grid system had existed in the Hellenistic town and that a different one was laid out by Herod – a common phenomenon in ancient cities (for examples, see Parrish 2001, 9–13).

21 Only the diagonal tunnel was possibly not aligned with streets.

22 We refer here to the aqueduct, even though there is not conclusive proof that it was

The defense system of Herod's Caesarea is fairly well known. A wall, 1.8–2.2 m wide, fringed the city on the north, east and west along a course which is more or less known. The sea protected the city on its western side; however, the presence of a defense wall along the coast will probably remain an open question.²³ The wall included a series of round and square towers. Three round towers (12.5 m in diameter) have so far been exposed, two adjacent ones in the north and the third, on the south, close to the theater. It is almost certain that the two northern towers formed part of the city gate on this side. There are also some indications that the southern round tower was initially intended to form part of a gate that was probably never built. Both of these gates were in alignment with major streets of the city (the two most important *cardines*). Such alignments were surely preplanned. A third gate must have existed on the eastern side of the city, offering entry to those approaching Caesarea on a road from that direction during most of the city's later periods.

An outstanding irregularity in the city's structure exists in the location of the precinct of the temple of Augustus and Rome, which is at an angle to the rest of the grid. This deviation might reflect an earlier structure that stood here,²⁴ but it seems that the real reason lay in the desire to have the temple face the harbour, a situation which is well-expressed by Josephus (*War* 1.414; *Ant.* 15.340):

On an eminence facing the harbour-mouth stood Caesar's temple, remarkable for its beauty and grand proportions....

In a circle round the harbour there was a continuous line of dwellings constructed of the most polished stone, and in their midst was a mound on which there stood a temple of Caesar, visible a great way off to those sailing into the harbour,

Even though this paper is devoted to a general discussion of town planning in Herod's kingdom, the Temple of Augustus and Rome merits a more detailed study, especially since it reflects on general aspects of the city planning. The temple was at the centre of the precinct (*temenos*), which was located at the city's highest point (as seen in Josephus), *c.* 11.5 m above sea level. A large part of the precinct is based on the natural rock that attains a height of *c.* 10.5 m above sea level. However, all around the precinct substantial retaining walls were built, and massive fills were dumped behind them, creating a platform of sorts. This insula, which was mainly occupied by the *temenos*, was surrounded on three sides by streets, while on its fourth (western) side it was bounded by the inner harbour (in fact, its western quay). A most striking feature is the temple's orientation (as well as that of the *temenos*). On the one hand it diverts 30 degrees from the general grid of the city, but on the other hand, even though the harbour was not planned according to any grid, the temple roughly matches the harbour's general orientation.

The precinct was basically rectangular in shape, but its eastern side was curvilinear. The *temenos* was 90 m long (up to the top of the curve) and 100 m wide. Important additions to this 'Temple Platform' were two built projections on the

built by Herod.

23 This was the result of erosion along the coast.

24 To date, no such remains have been found.

western side, each 21 m long (from east to west) and 9.5 m wide. (The 12 arched spaces, each 5.5 m wide, exposed between these extensions, for a long time believed to be an integral part of Herod's project, were proven to be Byzantine.) Between the two built projections was a strip of land (80 x 21 m), which was bounded on the west by a low revetment, separating it from the harbour's quay. At its centre there are remains of a 10-m-wide main access to the Temple, initially from the staircase, of the days of Herod. The temple proper was 46 m long and 28.5 wide. Only its foundations have survived, but its plan, together with a few architectural elements exposed in the vicinity, makes a reasonable reconstruction possible. Most of the temple's foundations are 8 m wide, evidently in order to bear both the building's walls and the surrounding porticoes (Fig. 6). The temple either stood on a podium, characteristic to Roman temples, or was located on top a stylobate with steps on all sides,²⁵ so common among Greek and Hellenistic temples.

Although no evidence of colonnades on the fringes of the *temenos* have as yet been exposed, other examples from the Roman world, and in particular the *temenos* of Samaria-Sebaste (Fig. 7), as well as general architectural considerations, call for similar colonnades. The present writer believes that once further excavations will be carried out here, such evidence will be found (in the form of foundations). Their width is equal to the most reasonable width (9.5 m) that this hypothetical colonnade could have had – apparently a double colonnade similar to the one at Samaria.²⁶ In any case, the aforementioned two built projections may be considered as indirect proof of such a colonnade.

The architectural interrelationship between the temple precinct and the adjacent harbour merits some further attention. Separation between the two complexes was achieved not only by the difference in elevations, but also by the above-mentioned strip of land (on both sides of the main stairway), which most probably contained a garden. The staircase was initially based on piers and arches; however, although most of the stairs descended toward the west (the harbour) terminating in a landing c. 2 m above the quay, the lowest stairs led in the opposite direction (see drawing).²⁷

Worthy of note is another, minor staircase, leading to the precinct from the south, i. e., not from the harbour but from the city itself. It is located opposite *Cardo* 1, which leads directly to the theatre and, as explained above, to the gate in the southern wall, which might have preceded this edifice. Theoretically there might have been a similar, minor staircase on the north. The narrow irregular strips, left between the precinct and the streets to the south, east and north, might have been occupied by gardens and/or shops. We lack any data relating to the location of other tentative public buildings or spaces, such as the *Boule*, the *Agora* (Forum), etc. Scholars tend to locate the hypothetical *agora* somewhere east of the temple area.

The relationship between the harbour and the city is as yet unclear. On the one hand, two of the major *decumani* are connected to the harbour. On the other hand,

25 Kahn 1996, 142, fig. 8 – the present writer favours this option.

26 The double colonnade in Sebaste, according to its foundations, was ca. 10 m wide.

27 This was apparently in order to avoid a clash with the activity on the quay.

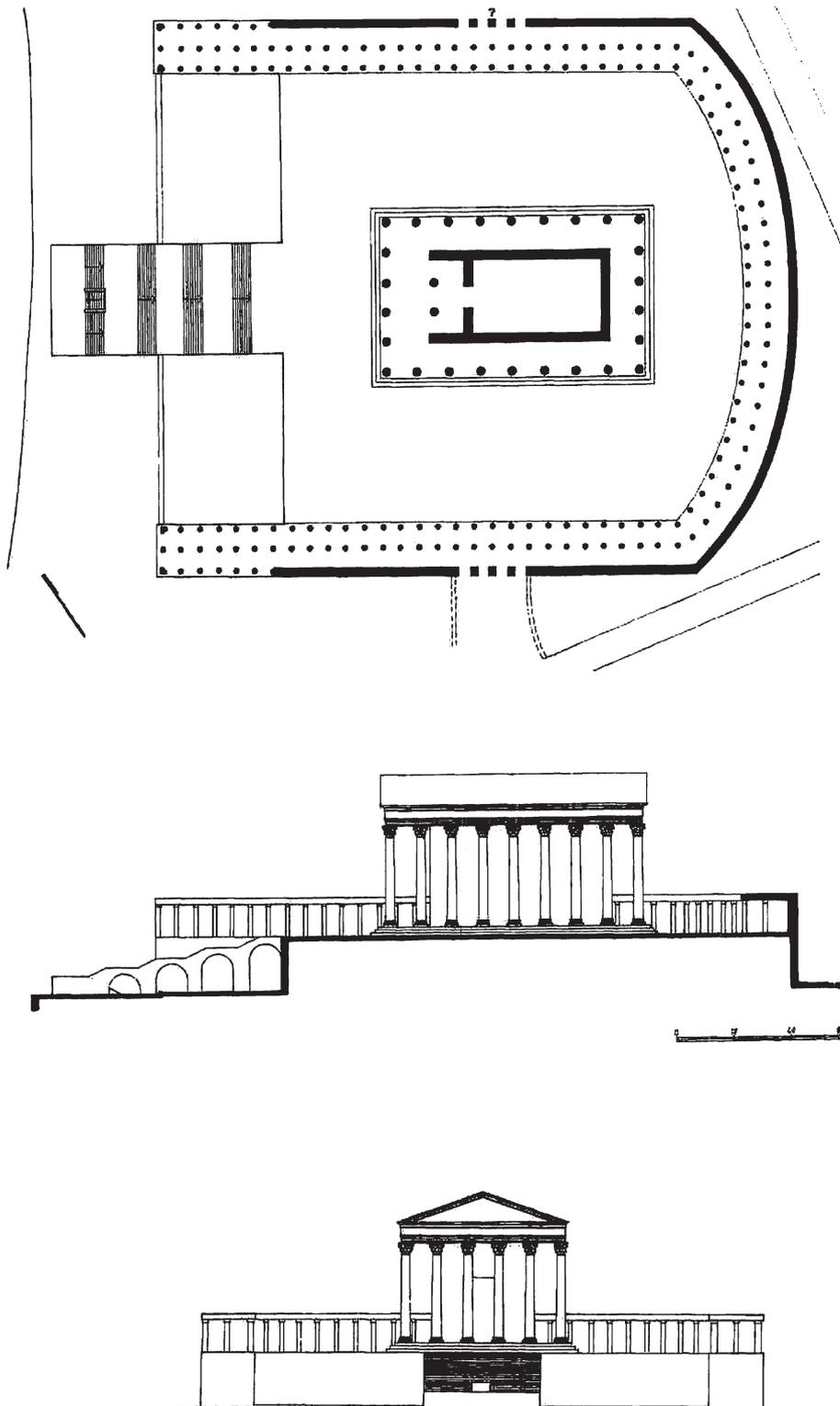


Fig. 6: Plan and elevations of Augustus and Rome Temple in Caesarea, together with its precinct, reconstructed by the present writer (drawn by R. Laureys).

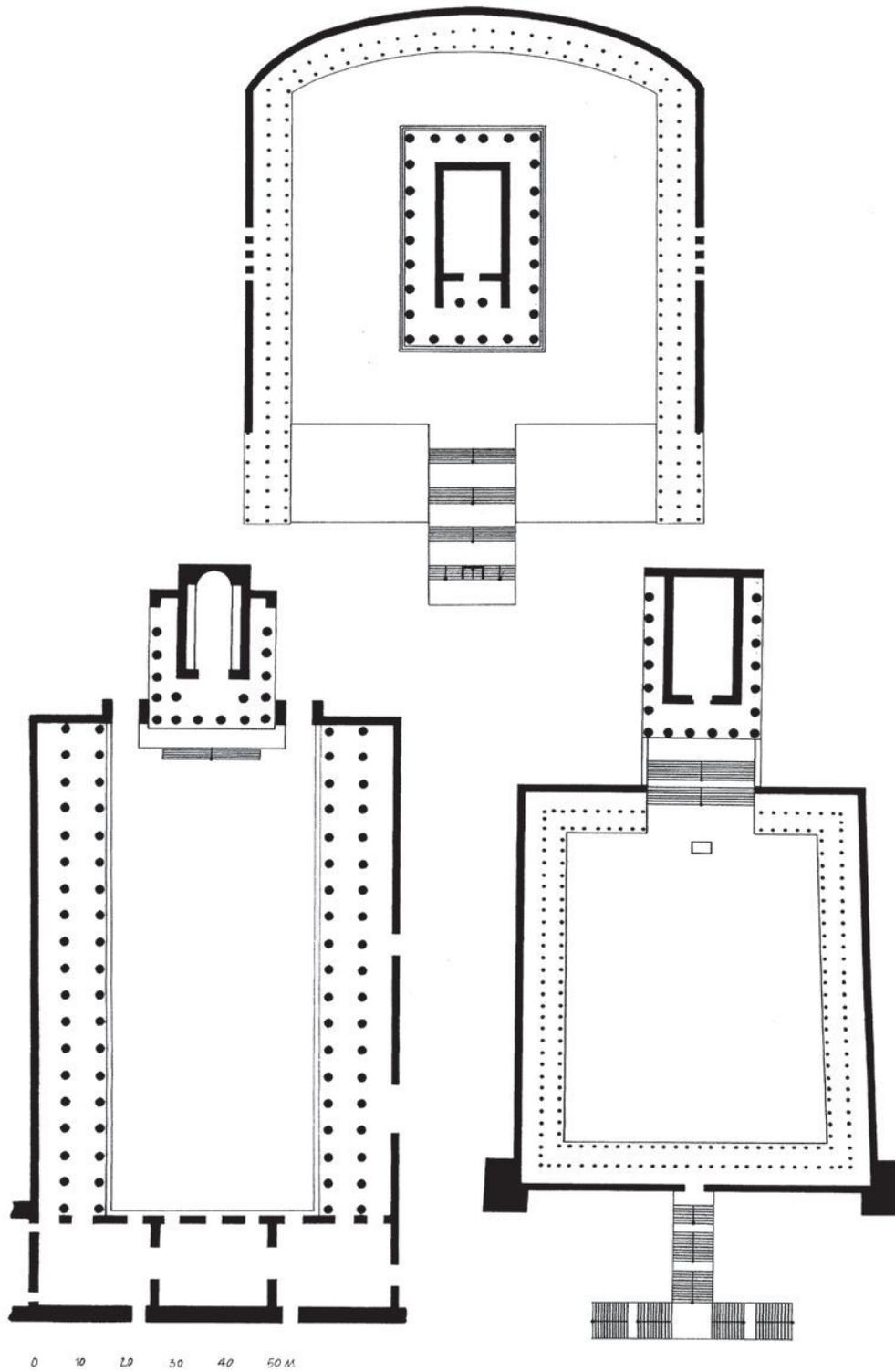


Fig. 7: A comparative table of three complexes, in the same scale (from left to right): Forum Iulium in Rome, the Temple of Augustus in Sebaste, and the Temple of Augustus and Rome in Caesarea

Josephus' description of warehouses around the harbour does not exactly match the data at hand. The block of storerooms exposed opposite the sea, south of Decumanus S1, is apparently from later times. No place for any storerooms was left adjacent to the temple precinct, and our knowledge of the area to the north is meager due to insufficient excavations. The southern part of the city might not have been built in the first years of construction.²⁸ (In theory other parts of the city, in the north or the east, were also yet undeveloped at that stage.) As to the southern edge of the city, the situation changed dramatically once Herod decided how to celebrate the inauguration of the building of this prestigious city; a grand festival which was combined with the first in a new series of quinquennial games (in honor of Augustus, *c.* 15 years after similar games had been established in Jerusalem in his honour). At this stage, the large vacant area in the southern part of the city was now earmarked for the staging of these coming events. According to the assumed 'master-plan', this part of the city seems to have been intended for regular *insulae*, mostly for prestigious dwellings. Such a major city undoubtedly merited institutions such as a theatre and a hippodrome, but in theory, they could even have been built beyond the city wall. Herod might have had his own reasons for erecting them in this area. Even his advanced age might have influenced such a decision. We don't know whether or not the proximity of the promontory palace was a factor in his judgment. However, we have no doubt that the extension of this palace toward the east was part of the preparations for the grand entertainments of guests during the festival. Two defects of this decision in the field of city planning should be mentioned here: the building of the hippodrome on expense of well located, potential *insulae* along the coast; and the blockage of the connection between a potential city gate and an important thoroughfare, in order to build the theatre here. (One might assume that an alternative gate was now built, slightly to the east, probably opposite the *Cardo Maximus*.)

ANTIPATRIS (APHEQ)

Antipatris was probably the last city to be developed in Herod's lifetime. To a certain extent, its development is similar to that of Caesarea-on-the-Sea, being based on an earlier Hellenistic town. One might also assume that the experience gained in Caesarea would be put to use in Antipatris, a site whose advantage was not only its fertile surroundings, but also its location midway along a major route between Jerusalem and Caesarea.²⁹ However, due to the limited area that was exposed, we don't really know whether the earlier Hellenistic town was already built according to a grid system, or the builder-king was the first to introduce it.

Of special interest is the paved north-south street (6 m wide) that was partially exposed during the excavations. It is flanked by stylobates of sorts, located at a distance of *c.* 2.5 m from the buildings on either side. Although no columns have

28 Porath 1996, 106–10.

29 In this sense Sebaste is also a candidate, being in a similar position in relation to the net of national roads.

been found in situ and no pavement has survived in the two strips that were probably meant to serve as sidewalks, the present writer is convinced that colonnades initially flanked this street. If one takes into account Josephus' information about the long colonnaded street built by Herod in Antioch,³⁰ this tentative one in Antipatris is of significance. One could easily envision many other colonnaded streets in Sebaste, Jerusalem, Caesarea, and perhaps even in some other cities.³¹ It will be the task of future archaeologists to prove or disprove such a hypothesis.

HERODIUM

Herodium, envisioned and founded by Herod, was not built as a city and it was never his intention that it should become one. However, one can assume that during the construction of this multi-functional, extensive site, Herod was able to implement some of his dreams with regard to the planning and construction of an 'ideal city'. At all events, the following two, parallel quotations from Josephus (*War* 1.421; *Ant.* 15.325) demonstrate that from a visual aspect, Herodium did have the appearance of a city:

Thus, in the amplitude of its resources this stronghold resembled a town, in its restricted area a simple palace.

The surrounding plain was built up as a city second to none, with the hill serving as an acropolis for the other dwellings.

Herodium, regarded as a unique building project of the kind throughout the classical world, is situated south of Jerusalem, on the fringe of the Judaeian Desert. It combined the function of a huge summer palace, a district capital, a memorial site, and Herod's burial place. The site (covering *c.* 25 hectares) was divided into two distinctive parts: the mountain palace-fortress and Lower Herodium (Fig. 8). The upper part, a round building which served simultaneously as a palace wing, a fortress and a conical monument (visible from great distances), functioned as an acropolis of sorts (as mentioned by Josephus), whereas Lower Herodium (covering *c.* 15 hectares) included several palace wings, various halls, bathing facilities, extensive gardens, storerooms and dwellings for the permanent staff and for the administrators of the district, after the toparchy's capital was moved here by Herod.

Most of Lower Herodium was not built as an assemblage of individual buildings, but rather as a cluster of structures interlinked with one another, surrounding the central pool complex. (Is this not reminiscent of the pre-Herodian clusters of buildings in Jerusalem, for example?) There is no *cardo* or *decumanus* in this compound, but there is a central garden (surrounding a huge pool) and the flanking colonnades – which in a way might resemble a town's colonnaded streets – and there are the architectural

30 As far as is known, Herod sponsored such colonnades only along the major thoroughfare of Antioch (*Jos.*, *War* 1.425; *Ant.* 16.148).

31 Ball 2000, 261–72. With regard to Petra, see also Kanellopoulos 2001, 9–22 & fig. 1; also Netzer 2002, Chapter 4.

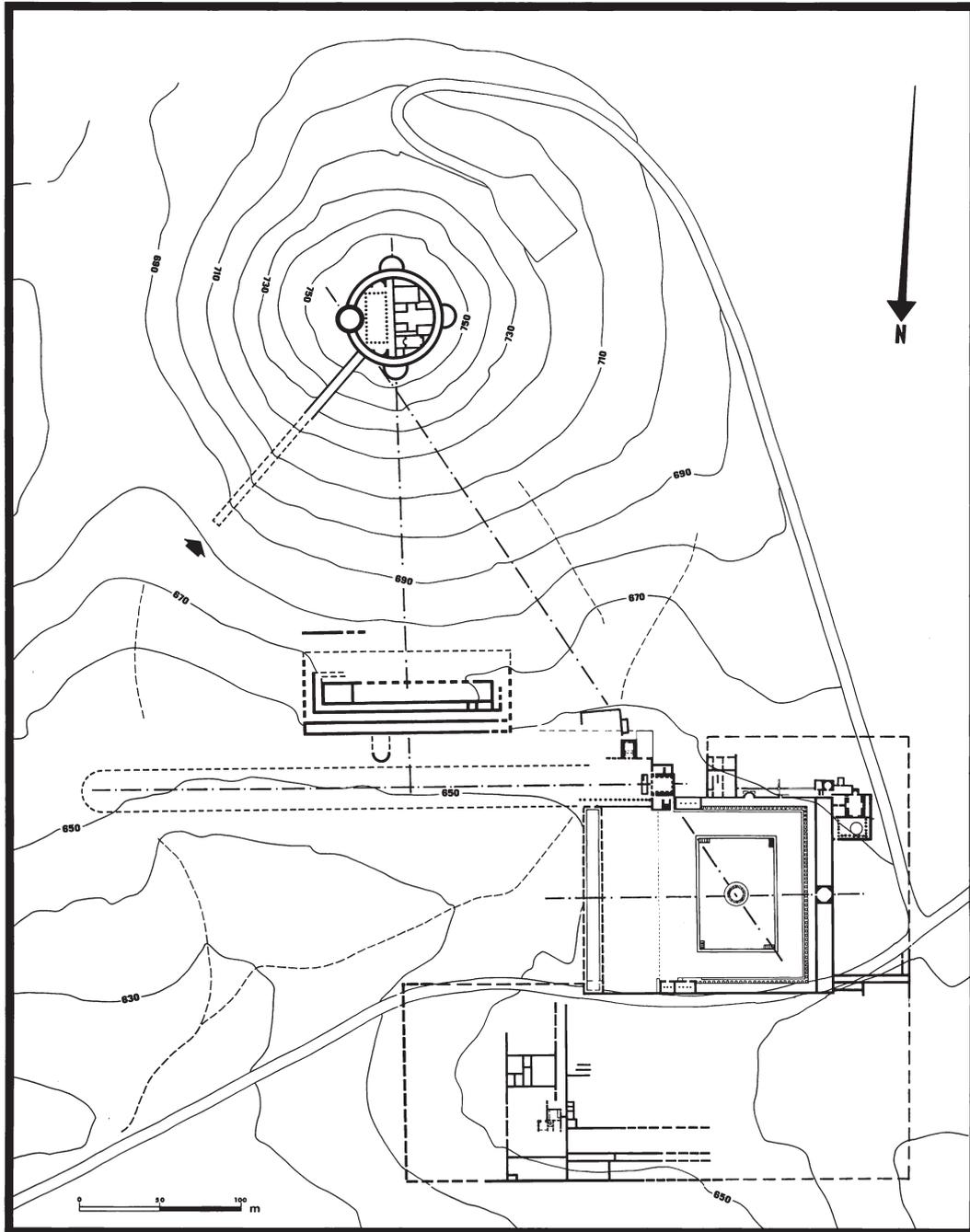


Fig. 8: A general plan of Greater Herodium in the reign of Herod, including architectural axes.

axes which gave the site its urban appearance.³² (Even the monumental ascent to the mountaintop might reflect a major thoroughfare; though no connection between this stairway and Lower Herodium has as yet been revealed, it seems that a well-planned road or footpath must have connected them.) If one analyzes the layout of Herodium, the position of its mountain palace-fortress might be compared, to a certain extent, with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and its large palace with Herod's main palace there. However, a major difference between the two sites is the lack of any defensive wall around the palace's wings at Lower Herodium.

SYNTHESIS

In spite of Herod's constant activity in the field of building, not a single original town-planning scheme was developed and implemented by him. (This stands in contrast to the abundance of remarkable architectural complexes, e. g. Herodium, Jericho's hippodrome, Jericho's third palace, the Temple Mount, Masada's northern palace and the temple precincts in Sebaste and Caesarea.) To a certain extent, the successful planning of a city calls for a *carte blanche*, but none of Herod's cities were built 'from scratch'; in all cases there was an existing settlement, either on a large scale, such as at Jerusalem, or in a medium to small scale, as in Sebaste, Caesarea and Antipatris. However, it seems that efforts were made to arrive at clear schemes under the existing conditions. Our experience in the study of Herod's building projects shows that the construction of new edifices did not, as a rule, call for the destruction of earlier structures. The same rule apparently applied in town planning. In any case, it was at Caesarea that the most comprehensive town plan was achieved. The plan itself is based on a 'regular' grid system. However, it is the details – such as the relationship between the Temple of Augustus and Rome and the harbour, or the direct links between the city gates and major thoroughfares – which made this town planning attractive. It seems that in Antipatris a similar plan was implemented, but the meager data available prevent us from drawing a clearer picture. There is general consensus that Jerusalem and Sebaste did not have a comprehensive town plan but one which followed, in each case, the natural contours. The only open question is the existence or nonexistence of a grid system in specific quarters of these two cities, e. g. in the upper city of Jerusalem.³³

In the long run, Herod's major efforts were invested in Jerusalem and Caesarea. (The endeavours in Samaria and Antipatris were less significant, no doubt.) Jerusalem was the capital, the residential city of the royal court (since the days of the Hasmonaean dynasty), and the location of the only Jewish Temple. Caesarea with its harbour (Sebastos) became a significant commercial centre, as well as the main link with Rome and other cities along the Mediterranean. It seems that the visual as well as the socioeconomic impact of these two cities, during the last years of Herod, was remarkable. Were Herod's dreams in the realm of town planning fulfilled? The

32 Netzer 1981, 102–9.

33 See above, note 11.

answer, it seems, is positive. We do believe that the celebrations at Caesarea in 9 BCE were not solely in honor of its inauguration, but also served as a sort of summation of all his substantial building activity. (Caesarea was anyway the most practical and uncontroversial spot for the holding of such an event.) In terms of the realisation of Herod's dreams, Caesarea might have been a culmination but not the only one. The other tentative peak, far from Caesarea, but much closer to Herod's dreams could have been Herodium (see below).

The following appear to have been the main elements that influenced the urban scene in the discussed cities:

*Temples*³⁴

One might ask how much of Rome Herod was actually able to see during his first visit there, and with how many personalities he was able to exchange ideas, in particular under the pressure he himself was, knowing that his family was besieged by Mattathias Antigonus and his men at Masada.³⁵ However, two projects at the centre of Rome, might have impressed the young visitor: the first on top of the Arx – the Capitoline Temple (one of the Roman Senate's common meeting places)³⁶ and the second at the bottom of the Arx – Forum Iulium (Forum of Caesar, including the Temple of Venus Genetrix, first dedicated in 46 BCE³⁷).

In my view, the temple of Sebaste features a clear synthesis between these two Roman edifices – the Capitoline Temple with its central and elevated location, and the Forum Iulium, the revolutionary new forum comprising a temple with a forecourt surrounded by colonnades. The temple at Caesarea followed a pattern similar to that of Sebaste, however, in contrast to the latter, it was located at the centre of the forecourt, on top of a low stylobate (as opposed to a high podium) (Fig. 7). However, by virtue of the absence of colonnades on its western edge, facing the harbour, the temple achieved its visual goal, as expressed by Josephus: "... a mound on which there stood a temple of Caesar, visible a great way off to those sailing into the harbour..." (see above).

Matters were much more difficult for King Herod in Jerusalem, where he had to deal with the Jewish Temple. Here traditions and the oral law dictated most of the specifications concerning the Temple proper. (Herod's architects must have experienced much greater freedom when building the complicated *temenos* around the Temple than when dealing with the sacred shrine itself.)³⁸ The only contribution that can possibly be attributed to Herod, as one learns from an interpretation of the sources, was raising it to a greater height than previously. However, with the ultimate enlarge-

34 For the prominent location of temples in the cities built by Herod, see von Hesberg 1996, 11–6.

35 Contrary to Roller's comprehensive approach (1998, chapter 2).

36 Roller 1998, 33–6.

37 Even though this temple was not completed by Julius Caesar, but by Augustus some years later (Roller 1998, 41).

38 We intend to discuss this subject elsewhere.

ment of the Temple Mount (surrounded by colonnades on three sides³⁹ and the Royal Stoa on the fourth)⁴⁰ to a monumental size, it became a monument in itself, a target for tens of thousands of pilgrims, but at the same time a frame of sorts for the Temple proper at its centre. As mentioned above, the fact that Herod was not allowed to enter the Temple must have greatly influenced the layout of the Temple Mount, resulting in the addition of the Royal Stoa, notwithstanding the very difficult topographic conditions.

Palaces

We shall not discuss whether or not a palace was excavated in Sebaste (future excavations might provide an answer, and also establish the existence of a palatial mansion at Antipatris). Caesarea's palace, jutting into the sea on top of a promontory, was an intimate mansion with a large swimming pool at its centre, surrounded by colonnades. Being the only structure projecting from the coastline, except for the harbour, it was no doubt impressive. We see no reason to assume the presence of another palace in this remote city. We have already noted the prominent position of Herod's main palace in Jerusalem.⁴¹ Aside from the Antonia, the palatial fortress during the early years of his reign, the capital also contained few other palaces, including the Hasmonaean palace in the Upper City, whose exact location is as yet unknown. Once the main palace was completed, with the three multistoried towers next to it, its priority was unquestionable.

Major Thoroughfares

It seems that one of the most effective means employed by Herod in modeling his cities might have been the construction of major thoroughfares, as straight as possible, with or without flanking colonnades. Sebaste might have contained some of these thoroughfares, even though this remains conjectural. Most of the thoroughfares in Jerusalem, except for the above-mentioned monumental remains in the vicinity of the Temple Mount and along the Tyropoeon Valley, are also conjectural.

Caesarea provides us with more data, even though most of the remains exposed so far in this coastal city are from later periods. The single known street in Antipatris is, in my opinion, a very significant one, since it is apparently the only colonnaded street in Herod's realm that has been exposed to date. Various scholars, such as von

39 A rather common design, apparently also present on the earlier Temple Mount. A basic difference between the Temple in Jerusalem and those in Sebaste and Caesarea is that the latter lack a central axis in the surrounding precinct, contrary to the Temple proper and its surrounding holy *temenos*.

40 The integration of the basilica itself might have been inspired by complexes such as the *Caesarea*, but its function and significance in Jerusalem were no doubt different.

41 We have doubts as to the symbolic significance attributed to this palace by Japp (2000, 49–53), being the reason to build this edifice earlier than the other major buildings in Jerusalem.

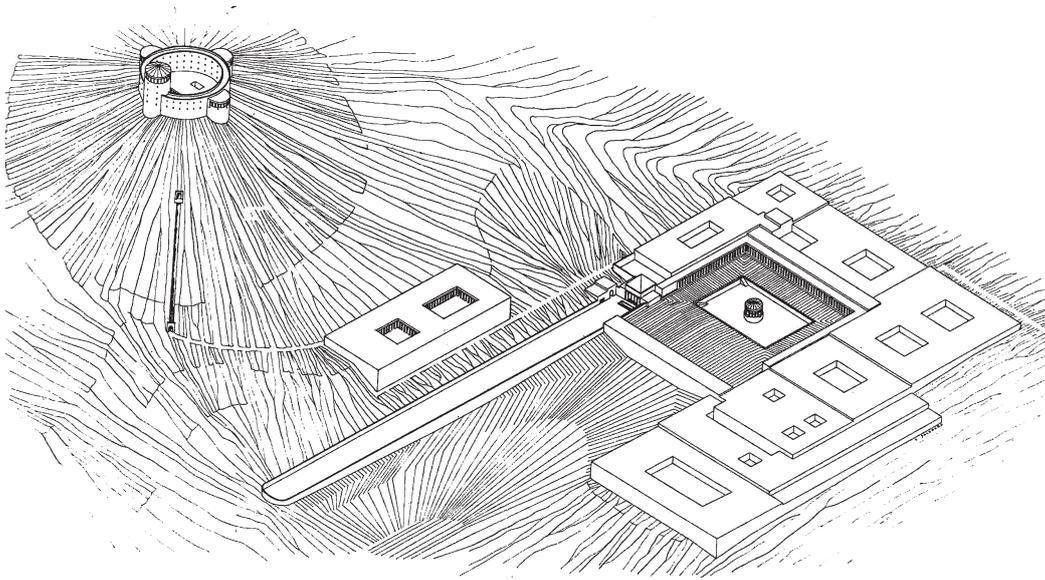


Fig. 9: An isometric view of Greater Herodium in the reign of Herod (drawn by J. Salzberg).

Hesberg and Ball, have pointed to the wide use of colonnaded streets in the eastern Mediterranean, as opposed to their meager use in the western part of the classical world at that time. It is perhaps too early to prove or disprove Herod's personal role in the introduction of such roads in his cities. (Unfortunately, Antioch has provided us with only a partial answer.) Being aware of Herod's ability, as well as his creative mind in the field of planning, one must consider the introduction of such a simple practical and 'classic' system as plausible.

A major question in itself is the presence of proper Agorae (Fora) in all of the cities discussed in this paper. Only future excavations might answer this basic question, although they probably did exist in one form or another. Such tentative squares were most probably used mainly for commercial activity. (In theory, shops might also have lined the colonnaded streets.)⁴² On the other hand, from the examples of Sebaste and Caesarea, it is doubtful whether temples⁴³ or shrines accompanied these yet unexposed markets, as was the custom elsewhere in many contemporaneous pagan cities.

42 Ball 2000, 261–72.

43 As we lack any literary or other data on contemporaneous temples, aside from the known major ones, which could have existed next to these hypothetical squares.

Axes, Focal Points, and the Integration of Gardens

Architectural axes and focal points were, no doubt, important components in the planning of architectural complexes in Herod's building projects.⁴⁴ These elements could also be effective in town planning. We have already mentioned the temples in Sebaste, Jerusalem and Caesarea as being focal points. Other focal points were the Antonia, the three multistoried towers, the *opus reticulatum* monument in Jerusalem,⁴⁵ and to a certain extent, the monuments at the entrance to Caesarea's harbour as well as the Drusion Tower.⁴⁶ The following examples will demonstrate the use of architectural axes: the entrance to the temple of Sebaste (if the tentative monumental stairway as envisioned by the present writer really existed); the orientation of Caesarea's temple toward the harbour; the connection between the gates (flanked by round towers); and the major thoroughfares at Caesarea. (To be noted is the tentative gate in its southern part, terminating in the side entrance to the temple precinct, which ultimately was not built.) The integration of gardens and water pools into cities is a subject open to speculations. The only examples, so far, are the tentative strips of gardens around Caesarea's precinct. Being aware of the role played by gardens and water in Herod's palaces (at Jericho and Herodium in particular), one can surmise that his cities also enjoyed gardens of various types.

Did Herod have an ideal city in mind? Caesarea was apparently the closest to the 'ideal' in his eyes, even though the capital, with its major building projects (in particular the Temple Mount), had a majestic appearance; however, this was not the rule for every quarter of this city. Our discussion brings us back to Herodium – possibly Herod's 'ideal city', in fact a 'garden-city' which never really functioned as a city (Fig. 8). This is in contrast to Jericho, spread out between the orchards, which gradually developed into a town. In the words of Strabo (16.2.41): "Jericho is a plain it consists mainly of palm trees; it is one hundred stadia in length, and is everywhere watered with streams and full of dwellings".⁴⁷ In any case, their sojourns at Herodium might have given the king and his guests the sense of staying in an ideal city (Fig. 9), a feeling Herod might have missed elsewhere.⁴⁸ The latter is rather well expressed in the words of Josephus (*Ant.* 15.325): "The surrounding plain was built up as a city second to none, with the hill serving as an acropolis for the other dwellings."

44 Netzer 1981, 102–9; Netzer 2000, 132–6.

45 This was located on top of a knoll, on the axis of the northern gate of Jerusalem, the location of present-day Damascus Gate (Ben-Arieh & Netzer 1983, 170–1).

46 These were, no doubt, focal points in the harbour itself.

47 The present writer intends to discuss elsewhere the structure of Jericho, as a garden city.

48 One must take into consideration the exceptional size of Herodium, being the most extensive palace built within the Roman Empire at that time.

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