

Caesarea Maritima

Contributed by Stephen Langfur

In 22 BC Herod ruled the land under Roman auspices from 37 - 4 BC. Some time after his death (it is not clear when), people began referring to him as "the Great." Christians chiefly remember him, however, as the killer of the innocent children (Matthew 2: 16). Herod began building a harbor on the long, straight Mediterranean coast. For the site he chose a Hellenistic city called Strato was a Phoenician king. Strato's Tower, which Augustus had recently given him. It had no natural breakwaters, but Herod was not deterred.

The project was ambitious, expensive and risky. The big harbors at Piraeus and Alexandria used natural protection, but Herod built his of hydraulic concrete. This had been done more than a century earlier at Cosa in Italy, for a distance of 150 meters into the sea. But Herod's southern breakwater, all artificial, curved a full 800 meters into the Mediterranean!

Local engineers had no experience building in water, and that of Roman engineers was limited to smaller projects. The sea bottom, a few meters beneath the surface, consisted mainly of sand. When building on so huge a scale, how could you be sure that the sand wouldn't shift or that currents wouldn't undermine the breakwater? In fact, you couldn't be sure. Not long after the work was finished (some say at once, others say after a century), the parts built on sand began to sag and collapse. In addition, there was a fault line: structures built west of Herod's palace or the hippodrome have sunk by about 7 meters. The harbor was doomed from the start.

To make concrete that hardens under water quickly (that is, in two months), the Romans used a volcanic ash from the area of Mt. Vesuvius called So called after Pozzuoli (Puteoli), west of Naples in the Campi Flegrei|pozzolana, which has high levels of the crucial chemical compound for this purpose: silicate of alumina. They mixed it with regular sand, lime and gravel or pebbles. The Roman engineer Vitruvius specified a particular source of pozzolana in Book II, Chapter 6, of his Translated by M. H. Morgan, New York, 1960|Ten Books on Architecture, published two or three years before Herod began the project:

There is also a kind of powder which from natural causes produces astonishing results. It is found in the neighbourhood of Baiae and in the country belonging to the towns round about Mt. Vesuvius.

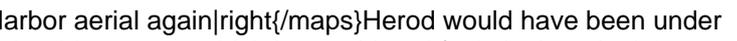
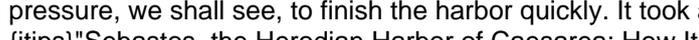
The last sentence turned out to be expensive. Using samples from ancient hydraulic concrete, scientists can trace the source, because each sample has a geological signature. Tests of the concrete beneath the water at Caesarea have shown that the pozzolana did indeed come from the area of Vesuvius. This means that thousands of tons were transported 1200 miles by sea - at enormous cost! Yet Herod had perfectly good pozzolana in his own back yard, in the area today called the Golan Heights, which Augustus had also awarded him. Why then go to the expense and trouble of importing it all from Italy? The reason, apparently, was the sentence of Vitruvius quoted above. "This conservatism," writes Cements, Concrete, and Settling Barges at Sebastos," in Avner Raban and Kenneth G. Holum, eds., Caesarea: A Retrospective after Two Millennia, Brill, 1996|Christopher Brandon, "shows how little they understood the chemistry of the process and how much they relied on experience."

Was Herod's dream, as some have called it, Herod's folly?

The reviews are mixed at best. In its grand form, as said, the harbor lasted no more than a century, if that. (See Eduard G. Reinhardt and Avner Raban, "The Destruction of Herod the Great's Harbor at Caesarea Maritima, Israel: The Geoarchaeological Evidence," Geology, September 1999|Reinhardt and Raban, pp. 811-14.) The place continued to be used as a harbor, but not to the same extent. In fact, because of collapses near the entrance, it was positively dangerous to try and sail in. There is evidence of shipwrecks.

The Engineering Feat

Geology aside, the engineering feat was remarkable. Several techniques were used, all of them variations on the instructions of Vitruvius. At the western end of the northern breakwater, archaeologists have found the submerged remains of concrete blocks 15 x 11.5 meters and 2 m. high (Brandon, op. cit., p. 34). Each was cast within a prefabricated form. Each side of each form consisted of a double wall of planks. The space within the double wall was 9 inches across. Each double wall sat firmly in a large beam underneath, so that no water could get into that 9 inch hollow. The four watertight walls made the framework buoyant. Between the walls were beams and struts to keep it from bending, but the form had no bottom. Stones were heaped on the floor of the sea and the form was floated out to them. Once the divers had maneuvered it to its planned position, they filled the spaces of each double wall with pozzolana concrete, and the form sank into the rock bed. Then they piled more rocks against the sides to make sure it stayed put. This done, they filled the flooded inside of the form, layering the ingredients, including more pozzolana. "The concrete bonded to the rubble bedding, filling the voids and ensuring a solid bearing (Brandon, op. cit., p. 34)."

 Harbor aerial again  Herod would have been under pressure, we shall see, to finish the harbor quickly. It took about ten years, which is considered fast. Archaeologist  "Sebastos, the Herodian Harbor of Caesarea: How It Was Built and Operated," CMS News, Report No. 19, Haifa, 1992  has suggested that the divers first laid island bases at strategic points, from which they could then build concurrently toward each other. They built barges that would serve as forms, each destined for one short voyage. The remains of three such barges have been studied. Here again is Brandon (p. 35):

After being launched [the barges] were loaded with a layer of pozzolana-based concrete to a depth of 0.5 m. and allowed to set before being towed out to the site. Anchored in place, lighters and barges transferred more concrete into them to settle them onto the seabed... It would have required only 1.5 m. of fill to sink them....Rubble was piled against the sides to secure them in place and to protect them from being undercut.

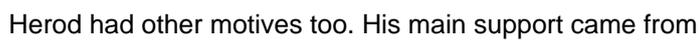
There are indications that in the shallow water near the shore (up to 2 meters), a simpler method was used: piles and overlapping planks were driven into the sandy sea bottom, making a rectangular form with enough of a seal to retain concrete. They followed this procedure form by form, step by step.

So much for the techniques. But what was the thinking behind the decision to build this harbor and its adjoining city? We must consider Herod's motives and Rome's (for Herod could not have built so grand an affair without Roman approval and aid).

Herod's motives

If Herod wanted to be a major player in the Mediterranean basin, he needed a harbor. He could have enlarged the one at Gaza, for Augustus had given it to him. But Gaza was near Alexandria. The latter was the second largest city in the classical world, a gateway from the Mediterranean to East Africa, Arabia and India; it boasted a magnificent harbor. To build another so nearby would have served little purpose.

 Lack of natural harbors  One function of a major harbor was to provide a safe place for ships to abide the winter (the turbulent winter weather made it unsafe to sail). Herod could justify building one harbor well to the north of Gaza, because the coast was long and straight, lacking sheltered places. There was Jaffa, of course, but its reefs were dangerous (and the population too Jewish for the Romanizing project Herod had in mind). The next good option to the north was Dor, but it lay outside his realm. He chose, therefore, the aforementioned Strato's Tower. It linked up nicely with the Jezreel Plain and the international trunk road, as well as with a major city he was rebuilding in the highlands, a kind of pagan capital, to be named Sebastia.

Herod had other motives too. His main support came from Rome - specifically, from Augustus and his designated successor,  Agrippa had won the day for Augustus against Marc Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 BC, had been put in charge of the East, and was slated to be the next emperor.  He needed a reliable point of contact with Rome. Besides, he was immensely grateful to Augustus: although Herod had supported Antony during the civil war, Augustus had spared his life and restored his kingdom, adding to it. Herod built the harbor, therefore, in the form of two arms reaching out toward Rome with a temple where the head would be. He dedicated the temple to Augustus and Rome. He named the harbor Sebastos, which is Greek for Augustus.

In the satellite image below, you can see that the temple and the harbor formed a single complex, on a different axis from the rest of the city. The harbor was turned toward the calmer, northern side; its longer left breakwater bore the brunt of storms from the southwest; the entrance was in the northwest, and the temple was slightly turned toward it. Imagine you are coming in from a sea voyage. You think Augustus is behind you in Rome? But here is Augustus-Sebastos embracing and welcoming you.

Not only did Herod name the harbor after his protector, but he called the city Caesarea - it was the first of that name. Up in Sebastia he built yet another temple to the emperor. Augustus, Augustus, Augustus!

But Herod's motives went beyond the desire to express his connection with Rome. He must have expected the harbor to make a profit. Since Gaza was in his power, perhaps he diverted the Nabataean traffic on the Petra-Gaza route this way. If so, the measure did not last beyond his death in 4 BC: Gaza was freed from Judaea and became directly answerable to Rome.

In the photo above, note the limits of the inner harbor. Here is how they look when we stand on the artificial platform that supported the temple:

Roman motives

The rulers of classical cities were responsible to ensure sufficient grain at reasonable prices. At the time Sebastos was planned, in 23 or 22 BC, Rome, with a population nearing one million, had recently undergone famine. A reliable source of grain was needed. ["Ruperunt Horrea Messes," The Classical Review, Vol. 31, No. 1 \(1981\)](#) David Stockton writes:

The harsh truth was that if Rome could not keep the seas and secure the grain-supplies, the city would die. Even without pirates or wars to worry about, the prevailing winds meant that, while the corn-ships returning empty or in ballast from Ostia or Puteoli could sail straight to Alexandria in a fortnight or less, the full freighters heading from Egypt to Italy had to edge round the prevailing northerlies and take at least twice and sometimes three or four times as long over the journey. In the early second century A.D. the standard freighter engaged in the grain-trade could carry about 340 to 400 tons, and though we hear of giants of over 1,000 tons burthen there were many more (especially in earlier days) which could not manage as much as 100 tons. In the late Republic and early Empire Rome needed some 300,000 tons a year. Add that the seas were closed to long-distance shipping from early November to early March, and reckoned very dangerous from late September to late May, and it becomes easier to see how the management of the corn-supply, along with other complex jobs of a similarly 'non-political' character, helped inexorably to edge Rome away from the 'amateurism' of the Republic to the centralized control of the Principate.

The valley of the Nile, annexed by Rome to its empire in 30 BC, could serve as a major source of grain. Perhaps Sebastos was conceived as a station on the maritime grain route that started from Alexandria. But Augustus had a fleet of grain ships built, [Each 180 feet in length and capable of carrying 1300 tons, a size that would not be equalled again until the frigates of the 19th century.](#) [so large](#) that they did not have to hug the coast. Adapting to summer's northwest winds, using a port tack, these huge ships could sail directly to the western tip of Cyprus, then to Asia Minor, then westward to Rome - a journey of 70 days. They bypassed Caesarea. For smaller grain freighters, however, the harbor would still have been useful.

There may have been another Roman motive as well. Augustus and Agrippa would have wanted a secure base for landing troops - a bridgehead - in the East. There was concern about [The main Eastern power that Rome had to reckon with, based in the area of today's Iran, Parthia arose on the strength of its cavalries in the 3d century BC and, in the 2nd, replaced the Seleucids in Mesopotamia.](#) [Parthia,](#) which had earlier defeated two Roman armies. Alexandria was too far south to meet a Parthian challenge. The next major point to the north was Antioch, at the bend where Asia Minor juts westward from Syria. Although the world's third largest city, superbly positioned to receive goods from the Euphrates, Antioch was extremely vulnerable. (The Parthians had already taken it, briefly, in 40 BC.) Augustus and Agrippa would not have considered it (or its partly silted harbor) secure enough for landing troops and training them. Caesarea was safer. It was farther from the Parthians than Antioch, and it was accessible from the East only by narrow mountain passes.

As things turned out, however, Augustus achieved a modus vivendi with the Parthians.

Finally, Augustus and Agrippa may have wanted to see whether such massive breakwaters could be built with hydraulic concrete, for they needed a harbor [Until Trajan \(early 2nd century AD\) improved the harbor at Ostia, it was plagued by silt, so grain had to be carted from Puteoli, 80 miles to the south](#) [near Rome.](#) The lesson proved valuable. Although Claudius and then Trajan used this concrete at Ostia, their principal approach was to dig the harbor out of the mainland. From the Roman point of view, Herod's Sebastos may have been an instructive experiment, showing them what not to try.

Caesarea did prove useful as a military base during the first great Jewish revolt against Rome (66-70 AD), when the Roman commander Vespasian trained his legions here. Likewise, the Emperor Hadrian had legions here during the [Bar Kokhba](#) was the nickname of Shimeon ben Kosiba, leader of the second great revolt against Rome (132 – 135 AD), which may have been confined to Judaea. The nickname means "son of a star," from the prophetic verse of Balaam, "a star will come out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17). His great contemporary, Rabbi Akiba, quoted it concerning him, adding, "This is the King Messiah." To this another rabbi retorted, "Akiba, grass will grow in your jawbones, and he still won't have come." The Jews of Judaea undertook the Bar Kokhba revolt, although in material terms it should have seemed hopeless, because of their belief that God would enter on their side – and here, already, was His Messiah. For the eschatological impulses at work, see "Covenant Faith vs. Roman Pincers" in this Web Site. [Bar Kokhba revolt.](#) The harbor was by then problematic, but the city itself had become the land's major Roman center, a status it kept until the Arab conquest in 640 AD.

The harbor's significance for the people living here

To grasp the significance of the harbor at Caesarea for the people living in the land, we need to step back 40 years before Herod planned it. Another "Great," Pompey, had taken the land for Rome in 63 BC, ending a century of Jewish sovereignty. On the northern part of the King's Highway, the Romans replaced Jewish control with that of their own allies. The coastal cities on the Great Trunk Road, from Strato's Tower (later Caesarea) southward, were ultimately given to Herod. These two major roads formed a kind of pincers, by which Rome could rule the country.

The Roman pincers were strengthened after Herod built this harbor, Sebastos. The local Jews and the Samaritans, living on the central mountain range, had been protected from the West by the long straight coast. Sebastos was like the opening of a wound in the side. Or to vary the metaphor, the Sebastos-Sebastia connection was like the thrust of a pagan dagger into the heart of the country. Soon after that connection was formed, some 93 Roman settlements sprang up in the (till then) lightly inhabited Sharon Plain. (Lee I. Levine, "Roman Caesarea: An Archaeological-Topographical Study." Qedem II, 1975|Levine, p. 6 n. 10). (This pattern was repeated later: whenever the ruling power came out of the West, the coast developed and the central mountain region went into decline. After this happened with the Romans, it happened again with the Crusaders, and yet again, in the 20th century, with Jewish immigration from Europe. Today most Israeli Jews live on the coast between Tel Aviv and Haifa.)

Rome, then, had firmly established itself. The immediate symbol of this transformation was the city of Caesarea Maritima and its harbor, Sebastos. For the first time, Roman architecture appeared: a theater, a hippodrome, a nymphaeum, and a temple to both Rome and the emperor-god Augustus. How strange it must have felt to a Jewish or Samaritan hillbilly wandering into the city - a temple to a man? And inside were the statues of these gods, based on famous sculptures of Hera and Zeus.

Little remains upon Herod's platform today. At present (March 2019) it is inaccessible because of reconstruction. When it is reopened, the chief reason to stand here will be to discern the ruins of the harbor beneath the sea and reconstruct it in imagination. Upon the platform itself are the foundations of the temple to Rome and Augustus, along with those of the octagonal Byzantine Church that replaced it. Just south of these stand the walls of a Crusader chapel. One can find shade here and remember some of the immense Christian history at Caesarea (our next topic).

{mospagebreak title=Christianity here }

Caesarea and Christianity

The story of Christianity at Caesarea is immense. Just to list some of the main points: Philip the Evangelist made it his base (On the next day, we, who were Paul's companions, departed, and came to Caesarea. We entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Acts 21:8). Here Peter encountered Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile (we shall rehearse this story in detail below). Here a prisoner named Paul spoke before royalty. Origen (ca. 185-254 AD). A Christian thinker, the greatest to appear after Paul, who thought through the Christian faith from what he called "First Principles." He did most of his work at Caesarea Maritima. In his Apologia Contra Celsum (1, 51) he mentions the cave of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Origen, among the greatest of Christian theologians, did most of his writing here. He founded a library which eventually had 30,000 volumes, making the city a major center of scholarship.

As the seat of Roman government in the land, Caesarea was also a center for the persecution of Christians. After Christianity was legal, however, it became a bishopric. Eusebius presided, writing his histories and producing fifty copies of the gospels for the Emperor Constantine the Great (280? – 337AD). In 312 AD, he received, he believed, the help of the Christian God at a crucial battle, thus becoming ruler of the Roman empire's western half. A year later, in the Edict of Milan, he legalized Christianity. By 324 he ruled the Empire's eastern half as well. In 330, having built up the ancient city of Byzantium as his new capital, Constantine renamed it Constantinople and dedicated it to the God of the Christians. Constantine.

Out of all this, the crucial event was the encounter between Peter and Cornelius, as reported in Acts 10. Its importance resides in the fact that the first believers in Jesus as Messiah were Jews. They believed in his resurrection, and they expected him to come again soon to complete the work of redemption. They devoted themselves to spreading the word among their fellow Jews. Instead, however, the faith in Jesus took hold and spread among the Gentiles. How to explain this?

One factor was that among some Gentiles, the ground was prepared. These people were attracted to Judaism, but the requirement of circumcision impeded most of them from becoming full converts. They were known as "God-fearers." We

have literary evidence for this attraction from {jtips}Seneca, On Superstition, quoted by Augustine in The City of God 6.11. For comment, see Martin Goodman, Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations, London: Penguin, 2007, pp. 391-393|the Roman philosopher Seneca,{/jtips} writing sometime between 40 and 65 AD:

Meanwhile, the customs of this most wicked race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world. The vanquished have given laws to their victors.

{jtips}Josephus, Against Apion, 2.282|Josephus{/jtips} also witnesses to the spread of Jewish customs among the Gentiles, especially the keeping of the Sabbath as a day of rest, but also the lighting of the Sabbath lamps and even some dietary laws. Indeed, the outermost section of the Temple in Jerusalem came to be called the "Court of the Gentiles," because Gentiles were permitted there. They must have been welcome in the synagogues too: At Pisidian Antioch, when Paul addresses the people in the synagogue, he begins by saying: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!" (Acts 13:16).

Judaism, it should be noted, was an outgoing religion before the destruction of the Temple. The Jews thought of themselves as a chosen people, but chosen for a purpose: to bring the nations back to the worship of the one true God. By them, the seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth were to be blessed {jtips}“And I will bless those who bless you,And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”|(Genesis 12:3).{/jtips} This people was to be a kingdom of priests {jtips}“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”|(Exodus 19:5-6).{/jtips} The idea was not necessarily to convert the Gentiles to Judaism, but to persuade them to give up their idols. That is why the Gentiles were welcomed into the synagogues.

From the viewpoint of the Gentiles in the Roman world, many no doubt, like Seneca, considered Judaism to be a wicked superstition, "wicked" because Jews refused to worship the gods that everyone else did (a refusal honored by all Roman emperors except Caligula). For some Gentiles, however, the unique Jewish focus on one sole God, invisible, must have had much appeal. It accorded well with Plato, whose thought had great power among the educated: Plato had called the supreme reality "the One," and "the Good," opposing it to matter, and on the scale of reality he demoted the things we can perceive with the senses. Any follower of Plato's would have been troubled by the various material portrayals of the gods in Roman religion—and would have been attracted to Judaism.

Add to that the sheer seriousness with which Jews devoted themselves to their faith, plus the fact that they coupled worship with ethical teaching, meeting in synagogues to hear and discuss the Torah. There was nothing comparable to the synagogue in the other religions of the time. "No one preached a sermon or read an improving text when Romans visited shrines and altars to make or watch sacrifices and bring offerings." {jtips}Martin Goodman, Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations, London: Penguin, 2007|(Goodman, p. 281).{/jtips}

Gentiles helped to build synagogues, studied with the Rabbis, gave alms, and sent sacrifices to the Temple. They had one foot up, so to speak, about to cross over into Judaism, and yet they were stopped by the requirement of circumcision. They were attracted, yet repelled.

One of the God fearers was Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian regiment, who lived in Caesarea. You can read the story here: Acts 10...

Acts 10 reports the first baptism of uncircumcised Gentiles. You can see what the ramifications were to be for all those God-fearers who had been standing with one foot up, unwilling to cross into Judaism. It took more than a decade, however, for the issue to come to a head. Paul and Barnabas had been baptizing uncircumcised Gentiles in Syria. The all-Jewish mother church in Jerusalem, which was centered very much on the Temple, had been aiming its mission at Jews. They summoned Paul for a hearing, but Peter had to support him, because of what he himself had done at Caesarea as reported in Acts 10. And so the mother church decided: the Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised (Acts 15). For all those Romans standing in suspended animation, another door was opened, and through it they could go, into a belief in one God (although the nature of that oneness would become an enduring topic of dispute), a God who addresses the human soul.

Thus began the movement of the Gentiles toward Christianity. True, "much of the extraordinary success of Christianity in the Roman empire, and hence the creation of Christian Europe and many aspects of our world today, must be attributed directly to Constantine's personal commitment in 312" {jtips}Martin Goodman, Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations, London: Penguin, 2007|(Goodman, pp. 512-513).{/jtips} But according to Acts 10, the first breakthrough occurred in Caesarea. From here, we can say, the faith in Jesus went out to the ancestors of present-day Christians.

The irony is that the great harbor city which Herod built as his chief point of contact with Rome (those breakwaters in the form of arms reaching out) became the initial point of contact between the faith in Jesus and the world.

{mospagebreak title=The Theater }

The Theater and the Death of Herod Agrippa

Rome took the land in 63 BC, but the turmoil continued for decades. Until Herod started building Caesarea 40 years later, there wasn't enough security to found a city in the Roman style on the flatlands. The theater must have signaled to people, then, that Rome had indeed arrived. Herod carved it into the kurkar is a brittle stone composed of sand and lime. Several kurkar ridges run on a north-south pattern up the coast. (In fact, they are ancient coastlines.) North of Jaffa are three. Counting from west to east, between the first and the second swamps formed. The third and broadest was thickly forested. Given the straight coastline, the swamps and forests, the ancient Israelites preferred not to live in the Sharon plain (the coastal plain between the Yarkon River and Mt. Carmel). This was why they viewed the sea as something hostile (as in Psalm 104). The Phoenicians to their north, with little farmland and excellent harbors, posed no economic competition and became their natural allies (e.g., Hiram and Solomon, Jezebel and Ahab). kurkar ridge running alongside the sea, just as he did the eastern seats of his hippodrome to the north. Therefore the cavea, containing the audience, faces west - not north, shielding people's eyes from the sun, as in most Roman theaters. The rows of seats are raked according to the natural rise of the sound waves from the stage, behind which stood an ornate multi-tiered wall called a skene, from which we get the word "scene." Only a few stones of the skene are to be seen today at Caesarea, and the cavea has largely been reconstructed.

The theater was rebuilt often in antiquity. On one such occasion, the builders recycled a stone with the following remnant of an inscription:

TIBERIEVM

...IVSPILATUS

...ECTUS...

This is the only mention of Pilate in stone. Like all the Roman governors, he lived in Caesarea, the administrative center of the province. Why then is he up in Jerusalem at Passover? Because there were so many pilgrims gathered there: he had to be on hand, in case trouble started. most of the year, and he must have dedicated a building here to the emperor, Tiberius. At some point this "Tiberieum" ceased to function, and the stone was re-used in a rebuilding of the theater. A copy is on the site in the palace area. The original is in the Israel Museum .

An event in the theater

As the architecture of Roman theaters became more splendid, the quality of the material performed on the stage degenerated. The most dramatic event that occurred here, however, was no fiction. It concerned Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great. He had been brought up in Rome. One day, a servant informed on him to the emperor, the old and ailing Tiberius, saying he had voiced a wish that his friend Caligula should soon come to rule instead. Tiberius had Agrippa arrested, although the head of the guard was careful to treat him royally, for he knew that Tiberius might soon die and that Caligula might indeed take power. Some time later, a fellow prisoner - a German - called Agrippa over, pointing to a fierce-looking owl in a tree. Such an owl is called an "uhu" or "bubo," and it is rarely seen in daylight. The German declared himself to be a prophet and said that the owl was a sign (from Josephus Flavius (36 ‐ 100 AD), Jewish general, one of two directing the revolt against Rome in Galilee. After Vespasian captured him, he prophesied the latter would be emperor. When this proved true, the Romans honored him. He then turned historian, writing The Jewish War, The Antiquities of the Jews and many other books. Because of a paragraph about John the Baptist and a sentence about Jesus, the Church preserved his works. Josephus, Josephus Flavius. Antiquities of the Jews. Translated by William Whiston. (Abbreviated in text as Antiquities.) Antiquities, XVIII 6.7):

"I think it fit to declare to thee the prediction of the gods. It cannot be that thou shouldst long continue in these bonds; but thou wilt soon be delivered from them, and wilt be promoted to the highest dignity and power, and thou wilt be envied by all those who now pity thy hard fortune; and thou wilt be happy till thy death, and wilt leave thine happiness to the children whom thou shalt have. But do thou remember, when thou seest this bird again, that thou wilt then live but five days longer. This event will be brought to pass by that God who hath sent this bird hither to be a sign unto thee." Indeed, Tiberius soon died (suffocated perhaps by the head of the guard). Caligula came to the throne and freed his friend Agrippa, giving him the rule over the area of today's Golan as well as Perea in today's Kingdom of Jordan. A few years later, when Caligula, now utterly mad, insisted that his statue be set up for worship at the Temple in Jerusalem, Agrippa laid his life on the line: bravely relying on their friendship, he pled with Caligula to back off - and the latter did so,

temporarily. Soon after Caligula renewed the order he was assassinated, so it never went into effect. Agrippa was in Rome at the time of the assassination, and amid the chaos of that day it was he who persuaded the Praetorian Guard to elevate the antiquarian, disabled Claudius to be emperor; he then had the guard surround the Senate, which wanted to restore the Republic, and by this threat he persuaded the Senators to accept Claudius. The new emperor, in turn, gave Agrippa the rule over Judaea - so that now at last a Jewish king replaced the hated procurators. One of his acts was to execute the Apostle James, son of Zebedee (Acts 12:2).

Thus the German's prophecy appeared to be coming true. However, he had spoken of "the highest dignity and power," and the rest of the story indicates that this phrase may have stuck in Agrippa's mind. For he began to build a new wall around Jerusalem, until Claudius ordered him to desist. And he gathered five local kings for a conference, but Claudius' man in Syria made them go home. There was suspicion, in short, that Agrippa was aiming for too much dignity and power. Perhaps to counter that suspicion, he decided to celebrate the emperor's birthday by a series of games at Caesarea (from Antiquities XIX 8.2): On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver ... and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror [i.e. awe] over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly....Accordingly he was carried into the palace...And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign....

The story is more briefly told in Acts 12:18-23: Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. cb(12,19); When Herod had sought for him, and didn't find him, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death. He went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there. Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus, the king's personal aide, their friend, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. cb(12,21); On an appointed day, Herod dressed himself in royal clothing, sat on the throne, and gave a speech to them. cb(12,22); The people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" cb(12,23); Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he didn't give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

The Mishnah (Sotah 7.8) indicates that Agrippa's Jewish subjects loved him. The death of this Jewish king in 44 AD, and his replacement by a procurator once again, appears to have hastened the deterioration of Roman-Jewish relations, contributing to the motives for the Great Revolt that started in 66. If the uhu-owl had not appeared, Agrippa might have enjoyed a long reign, the revolt might not have occurred, and - if we follow the reasoning of historian Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations, London: Penguin, 2007|Martin Goodman - a major path to European anti-Semitism would have been averted.

{mospagebreak title=Hippodrome, Palace}

The Hippodrome (Amphitheater) and Palace

South of the harbor, writes Josephus Flavius (36 - 100 AD), Jewish general, one of two directing the revolt against Rome in Galilee. After Vespasian captured him, he prophesied the latter would be emperor. When this proved true, the Romans honored him. He then turned historian, writing The Jewish War, The Antiquities of the Jews and many other books. Because of a paragraph about John the Baptist and a sentence about Jesus, the Church preserved his works. Josephus in his Antiquities of the Jews. Translated by William Whiston. (Abbreviated in text as Antiquities.) Antiquities (XV 9.6), Herod built an "amphitheater." The word, in his usage, can also mean "hippodrome" or "stadium."

When we leave the harbor area through the southern gate of the later Crusader city, we walk south till we stand on a very slight rise overlooking a long flat area. Almost 300 yards to the south, facing us, are rows of stone seats. That was the hippodrome's southern end. We are standing at the northern end, where the race started. We can make out the long straight rows of the eastern seats as well. The western side fell beneath the sea in the 2nd century AD, probably in the same earthquake that took the harbor's southern breakwater.

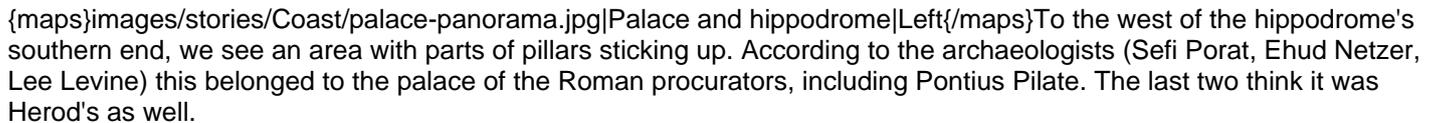
(We also see the three large chimneys of a coal-burning power plant built in 1982.)

{maps}images/stories/Coast/hippodrome_bleachers.jpg|Hippodrome with seats|right{/maps}Herod built the original structure, which was open to the sea -- that is, there were no seats on the west. (Perhaps he staged mock sea battles

there.) At a later phase, no doubt in response to a growing demand, the western seats were added, the whole thing accommodating perhaps 12,000. At some point in time, a wall was built east-west through the middle, turning it into an amphitheater for gladiator fights and the martyring of Christians. Later this wall was removed, restoring the hippodrome. Finally, in the 2nd or 3d centuries, a separate amphitheater as well as a new hippodrome were built in the eastern part of the city.

Just below us are the outlines of the starting gates. Down the middle (visible today only at the southern end) ran the dividing wall or spina. In order to win, a charioteer had to get and keep the inside track. As he circled again and again, the crucial battles for this track would occur at the ends of the spina. These sometimes held statues so contrived as to terrify the horses, to which the charioteers were strapped. If they collided with the spina at the turn, the chariots would go out from under them, and they would be dragged the rest of the course.

Chariot racing was the great sport of the Roman and Byzantine worlds. One remembers Ben Hur. Indeed, the political parties of Byzantium arose from among the devotees of the rival chariot squads, the "blues" and the "greens." The tombstones of charioteers all over the Roman world mention victories at Caesarea.

To the west of the hippodrome's southern end, we see an area with parts of pillars sticking up. According to the archaeologists (Sefi Porat, Ehud Netzer, Lee Levine) this belonged to the palace of the Roman procurators, including Pontius Pilate. The last two think it was Herod's as well.

Between the palace and the stadium, then, we have the scene for the following episode from 26 AD:

Now Pilate, who was sent as procurator into Judea by Tiberius, sent by night those images of Caesar that are called ensigns into Jerusalem. This excited a very great tumult among the Jews when it was day; for those that were near them were astonished at the sight of them, as indications that their laws were trodden under foot; for those laws do not permit any sort of image to be brought into the city. Nay, besides the indignation which the citizens had themselves at this procedure, a vast number of people came running out of the country. These came zealously to Pilate to Caesarea, and besought him to carry those ensigns out of Jerusalem, and to preserve them their ancient laws inviolable; but upon Pilate's denial of their request, they fell down prostrate upon the ground, and continued immovable in that posture for five days and as many nights.

On the next day Pilate sat upon his tribunal, in the open market-place (the words may be translated, "great stadium," probably meaning our hippodrome -- SL) and called to him the multitude, as desirous to give them an answer; and then gave a signal to the soldiers, that they should all by agreement at once encompass the Jews with their weapons; so the band of soldiers stood round about the Jews in three ranks. The Jews were under the utmost consternation at that unexpected sight. Pilate also said to them that they should be cut in pieces, unless they would admit of Caesar's images, and gave intimation to the soldiers to draw their naked swords. Hereupon the Jews, as it were at one signal, fell down in vast numbers together, and exposed their necks bare, and cried out that they were sooner ready to be slain, than that their law should be transgressed. Hereupon Pilate was greatly surprised at their prodigious superstition, and gave order that the ensigns should be presently carried out of Jerusalem. (From Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, translated by William Whiston. II 9.2.)

An example of non-violent civil disobedience that worked! Here the exception illustrates the rule. In general, the Romans yielded to Jewish religious sensibilities: before Pilate's time, they had not tried to place images in Jerusalem. According to Josephus in the *The Antiquities of the Jews*, translated by William Whiston, the decrees of Julius Caesar allowed the Jews many extraordinary privileges: They did not have to worship any god but their own. Alone among conquered peoples, they were permitted freedom of assembly (synagogues!). They were not subject to the draft. They did not have to bivouac Roman soldiers. Those living in the land of Israel did not have to pay taxes in the seventh year, when the land lay fallow. Caesar had granted them these benefits, no doubt, in response to their support for him during his civil war against Pompey, who had not only conquered the land for Rome -- but had committed the arch-offense of stepping into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest was allowed (and only in a state of ritual purity and only on the Day of Atonement).

The Romans had reason, therefore, to think that the Jews must be content to live under such an "enlightened" occupation. Expecting no problems, they put the land under a man of mere equestrian rank. That is, they did not bother to station a legion in the country. (The commander of a legion had to be of senatorial rank -- and could not serve under an equestrian.) Pilate had only about 3000 soldiers for the entire province of Judaea, mostly Gentiles from Caesarea and Sebastia. (E. Mary Smallwood in Josephus, *The Jewish War*, translated by G.A. Williamson, Penguin, 1981. *The Jewish War*, p. 465.) This force was utterly inadequate, especially after the death of Agrippa in 44 AD, when the size of the province doubled. But the Romans had no inkling of Jewish discontent. That is, they had no notion of the Jewish covenant faith.

When Pilate introduced the images into Jerusalem, he was violating not only the status quo, but also the Roman principles of governance for the province. The sole thing that could fire the Jews to massive concerted action was a trespass against their religion. In the present case, resistance took nonviolent form. Forty years later, when another procurator, Florus, seized money from the Temple, resistance swelled into violence, spawning the first great Jewish revolt. When it was over, Titus subjected more than 2500 Jews to torture and execution in Caesarea, no doubt in this hippodrome, much to the delight of the Gentile spectators (Josephus [\[tips\]](#) *The Wars of the Jews*, translated by William Whiston. [\[War{/tips}](#), VII 3.1).

{mospagebreak title=Aqueducts}

The Aqueducts

[images/stories/Coast/caesarea_aqueduct.jpg](#) Aqueduct at Caesarea [right{/maps}](#) The population of Caesarea was probably about 30,000 in the Roman period, 50,000 in the [\[tips2\]](#) Byzantine period – that is, the period of the Eastern Christian Roman Empire – may be dated from 330 AD, when Constantine re-named the city of Byzantium "Constantinople" and dedicated it to the God of the Christians. Its end, in this land, came in 638, when the Muslims took Jerusalem. Elsewhere it lasted much longer: Constantinople finally fell to the Turks in 1453. [\[Byzantine{/tips2}](#) (Just to put things in proportion, Alexandria and Antioch had more than half a million people each in the Roman period, and Rome itself more than a million.) The city had no springs, but the groundwater was not far down and there were plenty of wells. Yet a Roman metropolis also needed flowing water for latrines, baths and fountains. To this end Caesarea was furnished with aqueducts.

We find their remains on the shore to the north. The most noticeable rests upon arches. A closer examination reveals two channels. The one on the sea-side was built by [\[tips\]](#) Publius Aelius Hadrianus (76 – 138 AD). Roman emperor from 117 until his death. He quelled the Bar Kokhba revolt, the second major Jewish uprising in the land. After banishing the Jews from Jerusalem, he rebuilt the city, naming it Aelia Capitolina. He is also remembered as the builder of Hadrian's Wall in northern England. [\[Hadrian{/tips}](#), who claims credit on no less than eight engraved signs. He added his channel, however, to an earlier structure, the eastern one, which was probably built by [\[tips\]](#) Herod ruled the land under Roman auspices from 37 - 4 BC. After his death, the Romans called him "the Great" because of his building activities. Christians chiefly remember him, however, as the killer of the innocent children (Mt. 2: 16). [\[Herod{/tips}](#) (although Josephus does not mention this). At one time these channels reached all the way to the city, but the backwash from Herod's sunken breakwater has eroded them to this point.

Both the upper ducts extend along the shore for 1.6 miles (2.6 km), after which they tunnel 400 yards through a [\[tips2\]](#) Kurkar is a brittle stone composed of sand and lime. Several kurkar ridges run on a north-south pattern up the coast. (In fact, they are ancient coastlines.) North of Jaffa are three. Counting from west to east, between the first and the second swamps formed. The third and broadest was thickly forested. Given the straight coastline, the swamps and forests, the ancient Israelites preferred not to live in the Sharon plain (the coastal plain between the Yarkon River and Mt. Carmel). This was why they viewed the sea as something hostile (as in Psalm 104). The Phoenicians to their north, with little farmland and excellent harbors, posed no economic competition and became their natural allies (Hiram and Solomon, Jezebel and Ahab). [\[kurkar{/tips2}](#) ridge and continue to springs inland. Herod's totaled 4 miles, Hadrian's 9.

If we climb the steps at the southern end and look northeast, we see nearby a broad lower duct, which provided water to the (much larger) city of the Byzantine period from a dam at the Crocodile River to the north. We can also see the promontory of Dor, whose harbor suffered decline after Herod's was built. We see, too, the upper part of Mt. Carmel, with the tower of Haifa University.

At the time Herod built Caesarea, the technology of the aqueduct had long existed. In the early 7th century BC, the Assyrian king Sennacherib built ducts to Nineveh (34 miles long!) and Erbil, including tunnels and bridges. (Cf. Hezekiah's tunnel in Jerusalem.) In the land of the Bible, however, we do not find aqueducts bringing water into cities until the [\[tips\]](#) The Hasmoneans: family of Judah Maccabee ("the hammer") and his brothers, who revolted successfully against the Greek Empire in 167 BC. They purified and re-dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem, establishing the festival of Hanukah ("dedication"). They ruled till 63 BC, and their domain extended almost as far as King David's. [\[Hasmonean{/tips}](#) period. It appears that city dwellers required a strong government, one that could provide security over a large territory, before they could descend from the ever-more-crowded tells and live at a distance from the source of their water. The security provided first by the Hasmoneans, but especially by Herod during the pax romana, made possible large cities in the flatlands.

{mospagebreak title=Logistics}

Logistics for a Visit to Caesarea Maritima

Telephones: theater 04-636 1358

Old City 04-636 1010

Nature Reserves and National Parks (Main office: 02/500-5444)

Opening hours:

April 1 through September 30, from 8.00 - 17.00. (Entrance until 16.00)*

October 1 through March 31, from 8.00 - 16.00. (Entrance until 15.00)*

*On Fridays and the eves of Jewish holidays, the sites close one hour earlier. For example, on a Friday in March one must enter by 14.00 and leave by 15.00.

The Old City (Crusader city) stays open later because of the restaurants. Check in advance by phone.