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EHUD NETZER

VOLUME

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Hebrew Section

HEROD, AUGUSTUS, AND THE AUGUSTEUM AT THE PANEION

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Ehud Netzer's excavations and scholarship brought the ancient king Herod the Great to life. In this essay I offer one re-imagined episode in Herod's life in honor and memory of Ehud's own.

My focus is the immediate time and events surrounding the construction of the third temple that Herod built in honor of the emperor Augustus. Below I briefly list the relevant historical and archaeological documentation. The historical texts are, of course, long known, though to my knowledge nobody has yet woven them together. The archaeological evidence has been uncovered over many years by various teams of researchers, including Netzer, though the uneven pace of research has led to contested identifications and historical reconstructions. Following this documentation I provide a scenario that takes all into account.

Historical documentation

1. Josephus provides two descriptions of the Augusteum at the Paneion, based either on his own or some other direct eye-witness account *(War* 1.404–406; *Antiquities* 15.359, 363–64).
2. Cassius Dio and Josephus provide details of a trip that Augustus made to the east in 21 BCE (Cassius Dio 54.7.2–4; Josephus *Antiquities* 15.354–58).
3. Herod began construction of the new city and harbor at Caesarea Maritima in the 189th Olympiad, meaning 22 BCE (Josephus, *War* 1.15).

Archaeological evidence

1. At the Paneion, there are three stretches of *opus caementicium* walls with Roman-style facings. The first, of *opus quadratum*, extends along the scarp immediately west of the cave (Fig. 5). An Augustan-era lamp was found embedded in the wall's concrete matrix (as Rosenthal and Sivan 1978: 22–26, especially no. 55), providing a firm *terminus a quo* of the later first century BCE. The second and third walls, both of *opus reticulatum*, are about 100 m. to the west of the cave. They stand 2.4 m. apart and extend out from a large, partially rock-cut hall measuring 12 by 15 m. (Ma'oz 1992: 59; 1993: 140; Netzer 2006: 218–22 and pl. 33).

   Within the *opus quadratum* wall are eight colossal and two extra-colossal niches, appropriate for statuary. A colossal head (0.50 m. high), most probably of the goddess Roma wearing a Corinthian helmet, has been found at the Paneion. The full statue would have stood approximately 2.75 m. Such a colossal figure almost certainly functioned as a cult statue and would have fit nicely in one of the extra-colossal niches (Friedland 2012: 41–43, 51–52, 57, 75–77).
2. In the Caesarea harbor, excavators have found *opus caementicium* pilings bonded with pozzolana-based mortar, a material and technique otherwise attested at this time only in Italy (Holum, Hohlfelder, Bull, and Raban 1988: 100–105).
3. At Jericho, Herod's third palace, built along either side of the Wadi Qelt, includes several *opus caementicium* walls with *opus reticulatum* facings, identical in technique and style to those at the Paneion (Netzer 2006: 57–70).
4. At Ḥorvat Omrit, at the base of the Golan foothills in the northeastern corner of the Hula

Valley, excavators have found two constructions dating to the later first century BCE and/or very early first century CE (Overman and Schowalter 2011). The first is a small shrine with four columns across the front in the Corinthian order, surrounded by a temenos wall and approached by a staircase. Datable evidence suggests construction from c. 45/40 BCE through the end of the first century (Fig. 2; Rozenberg 2011: 55, 66, 68 and fig. 5.41; Berlin 2013).

The second construction, which was built directly over the first one, is a larger Roman-style podium temple with high front steps and four columns across the façade (Fig. 6). Available evidence suggests work by local artisans in the very late first century BCE or slightly later (Rozenberg 2011: 55, 66–67; Berlin 2013).

5. Herod Philip minted a long-lived series of coins whose reverse displays a Roman-style podium temple with four columns across the front (Fig. 7; Meshorer 1967: 76–77; 2001: 85–90).

Below I weave together all of the above information, embedding it within the known historical circumstances of the time, to provide a robust context in which to understand the events leading up to Herod's decision to build a third temple in honor of Augustus, as well some of the aftereffects of his decision.

21 BCE, late autumn

Exactly ten years have passed since the showdown at Actium. For the peoples of southern Syria, these ten years have been ones of exhausted, wary calm. Almost everybody can recall the uneasy decade leading up to that battle, now seen in retrospect as a time of heightened stakes during which the young but implacable Octavian carefully marshaled forces and resources to bring down his Roman rival Mark Antony and Antony's lover, the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra. A new order prevails. Octavian is now Augustus, first citizen of a renewed Republic, a man on whom the Senate bestows extraordinary, annually renewed powers. It is Augustus alone who decides on political appointments in the fourteen imperial provinces.[1] It is Augustus who controls the commands of the 28 legions stationed in those provinces (Egypt alone is garrisoned by two, the XXII Deiotariana and the III Cyrenaica).[2] And it is Augustus who personally bestows the right to maintain calm on behalf of Rome to four client rulers: Mithridates II of Commagene; Zenodorus of Ituraea; Obodas III of Nabataea; and Herod of Judea.

Of these four, Herod is the most assiduous in protecting himself by energetic promotion of his imperial benefactor. In the one hundred and eighty-ninth Olympiad, only one year earlier, he commenced a huge project: an entirely new city on the coast, to be named Caesarea in honor of the princeps. It will include a palatial and entertainment complex, an enormous new harbor, and facing that harbor, a monumental temple to Augustus and Roma (in accordance with the princeps' recent ruling that any cult to him must also include the goddess[3]). Herod has cosmopolitan pretensions: for the harbor he has brought in workmen and the most advanced materials from Rome herself. The new city will befit the new emperor — and, Herod hopes, augment his own stature in the process.

Now the princeps has decided that a trip east is in order. Seven years after the Senate first granted him the honorific, Augustus travels as a magisterial head of state, ready to bestow and withhold honors and territories as his own interests and local circumstances warrant.[4] He goes first to Greece, to Sparta and Athens. In the former place, he embodies largesse by awarding to the Lacedaemonians the island of Cythera. In the latter place, in contrast, he strips Aegina and Eretria from Athenian control, "because, as some say, they had espoused the cause of Antony."[5] Having coldly dispatched this imperial business, Augustus makes for Samos to rest over the winter months. In the late spring or early summer of the following year, "when Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls,"[6] he sets out again, traveling further east and then south with the continued intent, apparently, of making very clear the reality of his authority.

In Bithynia "he made donations of money to some… [while] commanding others to contribute an amount in excess of the tribute." At Cyzicus "he reduced people to slavery" because some Romans had been killed in a quarrel. "When he reached Syria, he took the same action in the case of the people of Tyre and Sidon."[7] From Phoenicia

Augustus turns inland, because there is need here of his adjudicating authority. The citizens of Gadara have issued complaints against King Herod, whom they accuse of "injuries and plunderings and subversions of temples."[8]

It is a bold move on the part of the Gadarenes to file such grievances against a king, especially one put in power by Augustus himself. On their own they might not have pursued things to this point. But they have been urged to mount their case by Zenodorus, the king of the neighboring Ituraeans.[9]

As it happens, Zenodorus has been making a name for himself in these parts of late. He has recently overseen the construction of an impressive structure on a high hill overlooking the Hula marshland (Fig. 1).[10] The building is elevated on a podium, fronted by four Corinthian columns, with walls painted in colorful fresco[11] — a prominent advertisement of authority and stature, and also an ambitious territorial statement since it sits on the outside edge of Ituraean territory (Fig. 2). It appears a blatant attempt to undermine Herod, no surprise since Zenodorus has vowed to harass him in hopes of gaining some of his territory.[12] Indeed, Zenodorus is playing a power game, and now promotes the Gadarene cause as further provocation.

For their part, the Gadarenes act as if the autonomy of their city, as manifested in local elections and shrines, outweighs that of a king. They cast Herod as an outsider and meddler, somebody without respect for their civic rights. But upon the arrival of Augustus and Herod, the city's leaders are rapidly disabused of their quaint notions. As in Bithynia, here too the princeps sizes up those beseeching him and quickly determines winners and losers: allegations are made on the first day "but the hearing proceeded no further." To Herod, Augustus "gave his right hand and remitted nothing of his kindness to him." The Gadarenes, now realizing "that they should be delivered up to the king, some of them, out of a dread of the torments they might undergo, cut their own throats in the night-time… [while] others threw themselves down precipices or cast themselves into the river. Caesar, then without delay, "cleared Herod from the crimes he was accused of."[13] Altogether an instructive episode: polis traditions fade in the clarifying light of a strong and simple hierarchy.

The *Pax Augusta* is a certain type of peace, one whose dividends accrue in unequal and, it must appear to some, arbitrary measure. With this trip, Augustus underscores the message of his victory ten years earlier. Antony and Cleopatra, that large-living pair under whose rule the cities of the east largely went their own way, are history — and so too is their loose oversight. The new mode is orderly deference. The princeps sets boundaries and settles scores, a process that those waiting to

Fig. 1. Hula marshlands, looking north, with Golan foothills to the right (photo author)

Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the so-called "Early Shrine" at Ḥorvat Omrit (Overman and Schowalter 2011: fig. 03.11, reproduced courtesy of J. Andrew Overman and D. Schowalter)

receive him misunderstand at their peril. The order of the day is wary care, with perhaps an extra effort to demonstrate the depth of one's loyalties.

After the meeting at Gadara, Herod escorts Augustus to Ptolemais (still the best port along this coast, though his new city will soon change that). From here the princeps intends to return to Samos to stay again over the winter.[14] Before his departure, however, Augustus learns that Zenodorus has died. This makes for a delicate situation. The petty kings of the southern Levant are dynasts in name only. Their authority is based wholly on the favor of the princeps, bestowed so long as he is convinced that calm will prevail. And Zenodorus did not acquit himself well on this score.

Perhaps, Augustus thinks, four kingdoms in this region is one too many. Perhaps the passing of Zenodorus should also mean the end of his principality. As the territory lies between the imperial province of Syria, the southern Phoenician cities of Berytus, Sidon, and Tyre, and Herod's small kingdom, it would be possible to award all or part of these lands to one or more of these polities. From the princeps' point of view, advantages and disadvantages accrue to each option.

Adding Ituraean territory to the province of Syria puts it under direct Roman rule. However the province is already enormous, a veritable treasury on account of the region's wealth and a kind of arsenal with the III Gallica and the XII Fulminata both stationed here. Enhancing a power base so far from Rome and just along the border with Parthia may be asking for trouble.

As for the Phoenicians, their culture is familiar to the Ituraeans, and further there is historical precedent for Phoenician control of Ituraean territory. Yet the three city territories are currently equally circumscribed and their orientations uniformly maritime. Making a large land grant to any one would come at the expense of another, and might unsettle a useful internal balance.

Finally there is Herod, at present king of a mixed population of Jews and non-Jews. These groups largely live divided, with non-Jews in cities

and towns along the coast, and Jews mostly in the country's interior. The Jews in particular have been prickly; their history of self-rule is fresh in mind and a potential wellspring of trouble. Putting the Ituraeans under Herod's control could further dilute the intensity of his kingdom's Jewish identity and thus lessen the possibility of ethnic upheaval. And yet granting Zenodorus' territory to Herod will greatly enlarge the size of his kingdom and considerably augment his position. As to this last point however, Augustus muses, Herod has just witnessed a fellow king attempting to magnify his authority, to back-firing effect. Herod must know that he is only as stable as Augustus is placated. Security of this corner of the empire may rest on Herod. But Herod's security rests on the princeps' trust in him. Augustus has Herod checkmated. An expansion of the Judean king's territory and treasury seems, therefore, the most prudent of the available choices.

So, before sailing to Samos — and as he had in Greece — Augustus redraws the political map. He grants the territories of Zenodorus to Herod, a magisterial move that the king well understands requires an equally compelling gesture in return, one that will send a clear message of imperial primacy to the power-focused princeps. In this world, at this time, there is but one logical choice: yet another temple to Augustus himself, this time somewhere in the newly gifted territory. Such an offering will neutralize any aura of overweening authority that this sizable grant of new territory might otherwise promote. The message will be crystalline — just as Augustus likes it.

The Augusteum set to rise in the new city on the coast would be Herod's second such edifice. The first, completed and dedicated, is on the highest point of the newly named Sebaste, situated at one end of an enormous colonnaded compound.[15] Temple and compound comprise the city's largest building project and present an unmistakable message: honoree as singular supremacy. There is in addition the added nuance of the city's royal Israelite past: at Sebaste, biblical Samaria, Augustus stands at the apex of history. A grand design, layered meanings — and not lost on the locals.

One completed temple in honor of the emperor and a second under construction… a third such structure, though arguably logical, is a bit fraught. A third temple will emphasize to Herod's Jewish subjects just how little they and their specific interests matter to the king. It will reinforce the true outline of political power and Judea's small place within that frame. It will, it must, disproportionately offend.

Herod considers the problem. How can he make an eloquent display of gratitude to Augustus while also maintaining calm among his subjects?

A third extravagance seems neither politic nor necessary. Anyway, in the event, it is not even possible. A temple in honor of Augustus and Roma must be situated in some urban locality, on a high, even commanding point where people who come to gather for other reasons will thereby come into its presence. Such temples are, by definition, civic structures, political in function and essence. Yet the Ituraeans are not city dwellers; no urban settlement exists in Zenodorus' old realm. Instead there are scattered clusters of a few houses, at some distance from one another.[16] None provide a suitable setting for a new temple.

So, three goals. The first: to build where sufficient numbers of people gather. The second, to build in a place unfrequented by Jews (who are already restive on account of the first two such edifices). The third, to build within indisputably Ituraean territory, so as to ensure that this latest structure is seen for the land-specific thank-offering that it is.

Within all of the territory of Zenodorus, Herod knows of only one suitable spot, with advantages both natural and man-made. It is a rural sanctuary dedicated to Pan, located just inside the new territory.

The sanctuary itself is not much to speak of; there are not even any buildings here. But the setting is sublime: a vast cavern in the face of a towering mountain, with a continuous gush of water below (Figs. 3–4). Such a place will provide the proper measure of magnificence. A second benefit, this one quite delightful, is that the cult here was founded by the Ptolemies, the family of Cleopatra.[17] So here too is a charged past, an aura of power, history, and ultimate victory — all to accentuate the new temple. Another favorable

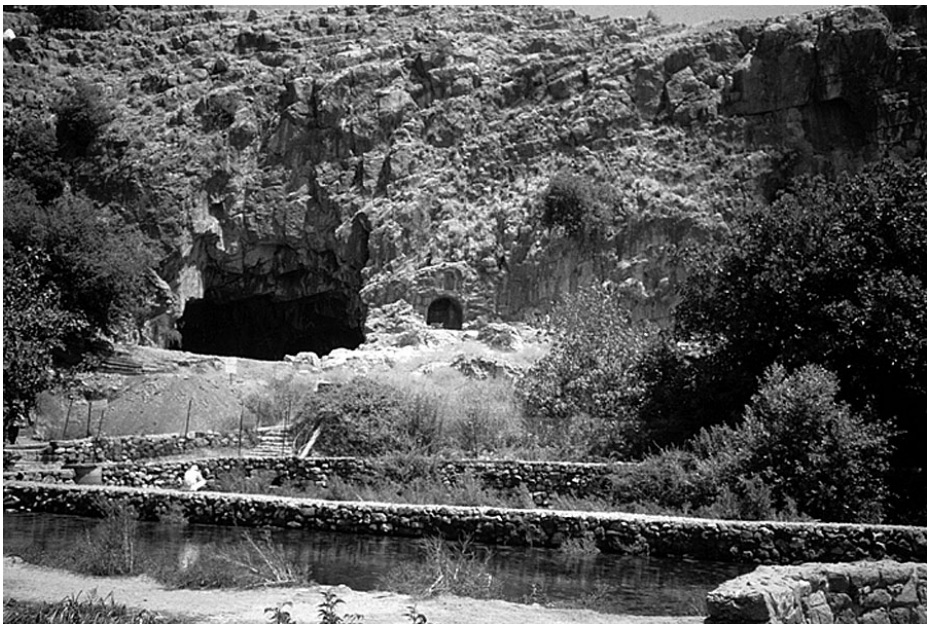

Fig. 3. The Paneion site (photo author)

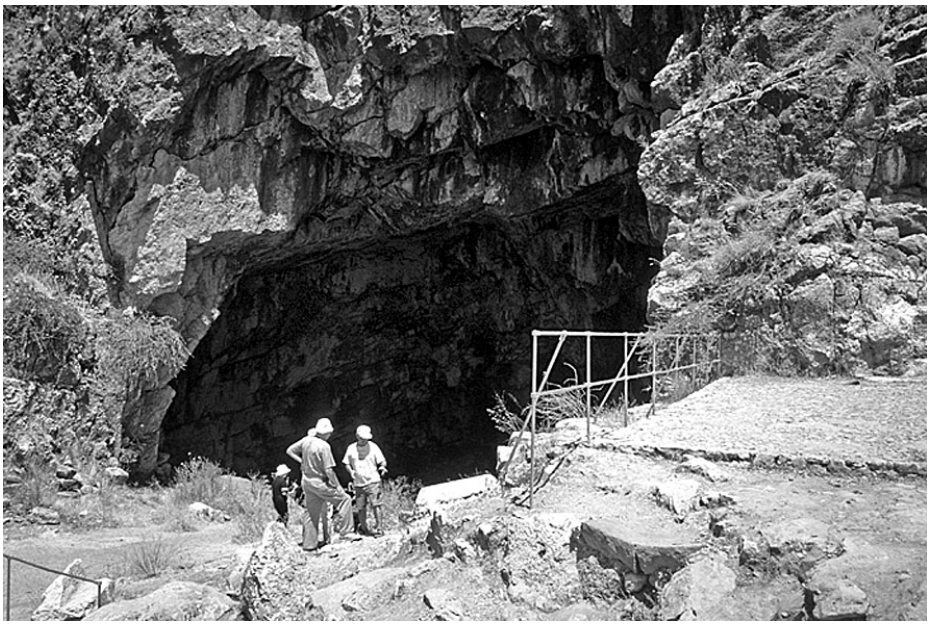

Fig. 4. The Paneion and cave, with area in front (photo author)

aspect is that, though quite old, the place is fairly popular: the number of small offerings here indicate a steady stream of visitors.[18] And of course, being a sanctuary to a Greek god, none of those visitors are Jews.

Perhaps best of all, the place is a bit tucked away rather than situated out along the road as Zenodorus' shrine is. Here, Herod thinks, he can build something to honor Augustus while at the same time not set off any of the Jews living in the wider vicinity.

The setting, impressive as it is, does present challenges. The cliff fronts a narrow terrace. Huge boulders along its edge constrain the angles of approach. The cave looms, a vast dark open mouth. Water churns out beneath the boulders, restricting the available area.

Up until now Herod's builders have worked

solely with large ashlar blocks, usually magnifying the scale to make a greater impression. But now it occurs to Herod that a different technique might provide more options. He thinks of the Roman technicians laboring at his new city. They have brought with them ingredients for a remarkable product, which when mixed with water produces a kind of artificial stone. They pour this liquid stone into forms shaped as they please. After it sets it is as strong as the familiar ashlar blocks. He decides to bring a crew up to this spot. Perhaps with their special Italian ingredients they can surmount the logistical difficulties here.[19]

At the sanctuary Herod will build directly in front of the cave. Here is an easy approach, a wide and level space — room enough to construct something substantial (Fig. 4). And here ancient sanctity is strongest — Augustus can become part of an ongoing story. Yet the new building should have authority: Herod prefers ashlar blocks. His Italian crew offers an ingenious idea: maximize the space by building a wall with liquid stone directly along the ragged cliff edge that juts out to the side of the cave and cover its rough interior with a facing of ashlars (Fig. 5). The foreman suggests niches in the wall, alternating between rectangles and semi-circles (he claims the emperor's new forum, now in the planning stages in Rome, will also be adorned with such alternating niches). As for the necessary statues of Augustus and Roma, he can fashion two especially colossal niches at the rear, just near an opening leading directly to the grotto. Herod is pleased at the effect and the association: Roman style and technique, suitable modes for the emperor.

With this temple and the newly installed cult, Herod intends a revival for the small old sanctuary, one that could include cult dinners and other official entertainments. For such as these, people will need a suitable spot to gather. The rushing water immediately in front of the cave terrace limits additional construction here. But a second

Fig. 5. The Paneion's *opus quadratum* wall along the cliff edge in front of the cave (photo author)

terrace, several lengths to the west, overlooks a series of pools fed by the springs. This will offer some man-made drama, a complement to nature's own arrangements. While ashlar construction could not work here — the space is abrupt, narrow, precipitous — the liquid stone can make something possible.

The builders cut back the cliff face to allow for a large hall, a kind of grand triclinium that will project out over the ravine. Along the front will be a colonnade, the stone smoothed by man flanking the mountain's roughness. To support the front end of the hall and the colonnade, the builders deploy their walls of liquid stone. Here, away from the temple, they do not need the traditionalism of ashlar veneer. Instead they use long diamond-shaped stones, creating a net-like lattice that yet stands upright. Two long sturdy walls rise in this way, following and extending the cliff edge. The effect is most pleasing: a surprising and elegant mastering of elements. Indeed, the locale brings to Herod's mind his winter compound at Jericho. The deep ravine here at the Paneion resembles the wide wadi cutting to the south of his palace there. Perhaps when construction at the sanctuary buildings here are complete, he will move this crew to Jericho. This ingenious technique may allow for a more dramatic series of structures there as well.[20] In the meantime, best to finish what has been started here.

Postscript 1: 66 CE

Over eighty years have passed. Herod and Augustus are both long dead, as are their children. But the world they made — a world of Roman power and colonial obligation — thrives intact. The animosity of the Jews towards the Romans, which Herod had successfully kept tamped down, has risen steadily in the years since his death. Some of this bad feeling is the result of the actions of Herod Philip, youngest son of Herod and ruler of the old territory of Zenodorus. Upon inheriting this sector of his father's kingdom, he founded a new city — Caesarea Philippi — named for Rome and himself. He underscored its foreign character by building an enormous Roman-style temple directly over Zenodorus' old shrine, making the place a marker for the southern edge of his new city's territory. Rising on a high podium and fronted with four Corinthian columns, this new construction confronts all visitors and declares Rome ascendant (Fig. 6).[21] Adding insult to injury, Herod Philip advertised his fine temple on every one of the coins issued by the new city mint (Fig. 7).[22] For over thirty years, coins of Caesarea Philippi passed

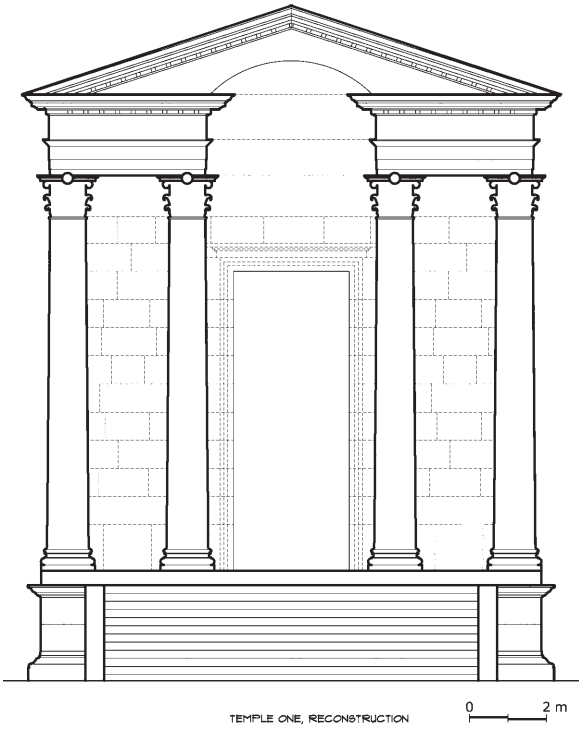

Fig. 6. Reconstruction of the first podium temple at Ḥorvat Omrit (courtesy M. Nelson, J.A. Overman and D. Schowalter)

Fig. 7. Coin of Herod Philip, reverse with temple (courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.)

through the hands of the people of Gaulanitis and Galilee, carrying a message of Roman dominance and Jewish insignificance.[23]

Now, a full generation after Herod Philip's death, the die is cast. Plans to wrest independence from Rome are underway. The commanders in Jerusalem have even sent a man — Josephus, son of Matthias — to Galilee to fortify the towns and prepare the people for war.[24]

Postscript 2: 86 CE

It is as the great historian Polybius wrote: Fortune shows her power in unexpected ways.[25] Who could believe that Josephus son of Matthias now resides comfortably in Rome, supported for life by those same Flavian dynasts who destroyed his birth city? He spends his days writing. He has already finished a great work telling the story of the war. Now he is completing a more ambitious project, tracing the history of his people from their very beginnings through to the present day. Herod looms large in both works: a personality to match the greats of his day, accomplishments that still impress, a man worth the ink. If Polybius lived now, he would agree with Josephus: Herod had enjoyed the best of luck.[26]

A minor episode, the building of a third temple to Augustus, but another example of Tyche's attention — as so much else in Herod's life:

> A substantial piece of good fortune came his [Herod's] way in addition to the earlier ones. For Zenodorus suffered a ruptured intestine, and losing a great quantity of blood in his illness, departed this life in Antioch of Syria. Caesar therefore gave his territory, which was not small, to Herod. It lay between Trachonitis and Galilee, and contained Ulatha and Paneas and the surrounding country … When he [Herod] returned home after escorting Caesar to the sea, he erected to him a very beautiful temple of white stone in the territory of Zenodorus, near the place called Paneion. In the mountains here there is a beautiful cave, and below it the earth slopes steeply to a precipitous and inaccessible depth, which is filled with still water, while above it there is a very high mountain. Below the cave rise the sources of the river Jordan. It was this most celebrated place that Herod further adorned with the temple which he consecrated to Caesar.[27]

Notes

1 Wells 1992: 52–57. The imperial provinces under Augustus were Aquitania, Belgica, Cilicia, Dalmatia, Egypt, Galatia, Germania Inferior, Germania Superior, Lugdunensis, Noricum, Hispania Citerior, Hispania Ulterior, Syria, and Tarraconnensis.

2 Millar 1993: 32–33; Keppie 2000: 228–29.

3 Suetonius, *Augustus* 52.

4 Millar 1993: 30–31.

5 Dio 54.7.2.

6 Dio 54.7.4.

7 Dio 54.7.5–6.

8 *Antiquities* 15.354–55.

9 *ibid*.

10 Here I suggest identifying Zenodorus as the builder of the Early Shrine that has been excavated at Ḥorvat Omrit (Nelson 2011: 29–33). I should emphasize that the excavators of the building have not made such a positive identification, and indeed there are other possibilities (Mazor 2011: 20–21).

11 Nelson 2011: 29–33.

12 *Antiquities* 15.354.

13 *Antiquities* 15.357–58.

14 Dio 54.9.7

15 Barag 1993; Netzer 2006: 81–91, esp. pp. 85–90.

16 Hartal 1989: 124–127; Hartal 2002.

17 Berlin 1999: 27, 30.

18 Berlin 1999: 30–31.

19 Here I suggest that the Italian-style construction at the Paneion is most logically linked with the ongoing work at Caesarea. The dating is seamless: according to the chronology of Josephus, work had just recently begun at the harbor site when Zenodorus died and Augustus gifted Herod with the new territory. This suggestion is contra Netzer's notion that the *opus reticulatum* walls at the Paneion, Jericho, and Jerusalem date after 15 BCE, when according to Josephus (*Antiquities* 16.12–15) Marcus Agrippa visited Herod and toured his royal properties. Netzer thought it likely that Agrippa would have been so impressed with Herod's ambitious program that upon returning to Rome he sent a team of architects and builders to Judea (Netzer 2006: 13, 54–58). Netzer freely admitted that there is no evidence for such a scenario

(*op. cit.*: 57) but believed that the essentially identical character of the walls at the three sites begged for such an historical reconstruction. I agree that the walls are almost certainly the work of a single trained team, but I think the likelier reason is due to workers borrowed from Caesarea, whose date and Italian character are historically and archaeologically attested.

20 Netzer believed that Herod's building at the Paneion probably followed that of the third palace at Jericho — but actually we have no idea of the order in which Herod commenced his various projects. Here I suggest that building with *opus reticulatum* above the deep ravine at the Paneion may have inspired Herod to imagine new possibilities for his compound at Jericho.

21 Nelson 2011: 33–35.

22 Meshorer 1967: 76–77.

23 Berlin 2012.

24 *War* 2.566–575.

25 *Histories* 29.21.3–6.

26 *War* 1.430.

27 *Antiquities* 15.359, 363–364. Translation by Ralph Marcus, Loeb Classical Library edition of Josephus.

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