

# *The Year Herod Conquered Jerusalem*

*Part III of the Sabbath  
Year of 36/35 B.C.E.*

In what year did Herod the Great take Jerusalem? The answer reveals exactly which year was a Sabbath. As we have demonstrated in our last chapter, Josephus indicates that Herod captured Jerusalem in the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. Nevertheless, because this issue is so crucial to our investigation, it behooves us to completely verify this date. The year Herod conquered Jerusalem is uncovered in the sequence of historical events that began with the time that Herod left Rome for Judaea (see Chart G).

As we have already shown, it took only 7 days for Herod to receive his Judaean crown from the Romans and then leave Rome in order to return to Judaea. He obtained this crown in the consulship for the year 40/39 B.C.E. (Roman March reckoning), then falling approximately between late January and mid-February of that year. Further proof that Herod was crowned by the Romans in 40/39 B.C.E. and subsequently conquered Jerusalem in the year 37/36 B.C.E. is found in the history of Herod which followed his coronation by the Romans.

### **Herod at Samosata: 38 B.C.E.**

Confirmation that Herod was appointed by the Romans to the kingship of Judaea in about February of 39 B.C.E. is uncovered in the details concerning his subsequent involvement in the war against Samosata.

- In *Antiquities*, 14:15:1–2, and *Wars*, 1:15:1–5, Josephus continues his story of King Herod by relating how Herod returned to Palestine, conquered Galilee and then Joppa, came to Masada and then Rhesa, and then marched on to Jerusalem. Here Herod was joined by his Roman ally Silo. Since during winter it would take at least a month to 6 weeks to return to Palestine and then a considerable time to raise an army and perform several conquests, these events take us well into the year 39/38 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning.
- In *Antiquities*, 14:15:3–4, and *Wars*, 1:15:6–1:16:3, Josephus reports that Herod's move against Jerusalem was broken by winter. At that time, Silo took his Roman troops to winter quarters. Herod, meanwhile, continued military pursuits but he reached Sepphoris "in a very heavy snowstorm." Finally, he also ordered his own men into their winter quarters. This evidence proves that a new winter had arrived, different from the mid-winter during which Herod came to Rome. We have now arrived at the winter of 39/38 B.C.E. (lasting from November 11th until late March).

- In *Antiquities*, 14:15:5–11, and *Wars*, 1:16:4–1:17:3, Josephus discusses the campaigns and events of Herod that occurred in the year that Ventidius defeated the Parthians of Persia and killed Pacorus. This was also the year that Antony besieged Samosata and afterwards appointed Sosius (Sossius) governor of Syria. Pacorus and the Parthians were defeated on June 9, 38 B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> Ventidius then focused his efforts on the subjugation of Syria. Once rid of the opposition, he turned his attention towards punishing Antiochus of Commagene who had aided the Parthians. Ventidius besieged Antiochus in his capital city of Samosata until he offered to obey the Romans and to pay 1,000 talents.<sup>2</sup>

It would be quite fair to estimate that, from the conquest of the Parthians in early June until King Antiochus had been brought to a point of bargaining with Ventidius at the siege of Samosata in Commagene, at least 6 to 8 weeks had passed, if not much more. It would have taken Ventidius at least this long to set up his siege works, which were certainly a contributing factor in intimidating Antiochus into making an agreement. The proposed treaty, therefore, could not have been offered any earlier than about August or September. To this information we add the following:

- During the siege of Samosata, Antony arrived. Filled with a desire to reap the glory of defeating Antiochus, he refused the treaty and relieved Ventidius of his command. Yet things did not progress as well as Antony had hoped. Instead of a quick victory, “the siege was protracted, and the besieged, since they despaired of coming to terms, betook themselves to a vigorous defense. Antony could therefore accomplish nothing, and feeling ashamed and repentant, was glad to make peace with Antiochus on his payment of 300 talents.”<sup>3</sup>
- Herod, we are told, after settling some affairs at home, marched out to assist Antony with his siege of Samosata. On the way there he defeated a band of barbarians and then joined Antony. “Not long afterwards,” and with Herod’s assistance, an agreement for the surrender of Samosata was reached.<sup>4</sup>

Dio, 49:19–23, dates these events to the consul year of Claudius and Norbanus (i.e., 38 B.C.E.). Since Herod’s troops had to come out of winter quarters for these campaigns and Herod had served with Antony in mid-summer, we find that the flow of events, as told by Dio, exactly match those as given by Josephus. We are now in the year 38/37 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning.

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<sup>1</sup> Eutrop., 7:5, cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 6:465 (under the heading of V. Id. 10th). Also see HJP, 1, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> PHP, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Plutarch, *Antony*, 34:4.

<sup>4</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:8f, *Wars*, 1:16:7.

### The Summer Corn Crop

An important detail from these stories comes with the death of Joseph, the brother of Herod, whom Herod had left in charge of the realm while he marched out to assist Antony. Joseph was killed when he marched on Jericho “with the object of carrying off the grain ἐν ἀκμῇ τοῦ θέρους (*en akme tou therous*; in the height of heat [i.e., summer]).”<sup>5</sup>

This mid-summer σῖτον (*siton*; grain, wheat crop) must not be confused with the spring harvest. Philo, for example, places the Festival of Weeks, which is held in early June, “in the middle of spring,” at which time, he adds, “comes the spring harvest (of barley).”<sup>6</sup> The mid-summer wheat crop, therefore, refers to grain that came to fruitage sometime AFTER the spring harvest of June and at the height of summer heat.

Since the wheat crop Joseph attempted to plunder belonged to the height of summer heat and not to mid-spring (the mid-spring crop, as demonstrated above by Philo, coming in June), it shows that we are dealing with the month of Ab (July / Aug.), the hottest part of year, and no later than Elul (Aug. / Sept.). These two summer months take place before Tishri (Sept. / Oct.), the month of ingathering for the late harvest—the time of the Festival of Tabernacles, which fell in Tishri. On that account, it was also dubbed the “Festival of Ingathering.”<sup>7</sup> As William Smith notes, “The time of the festival fell in the autumn, when the whole of the chief fruits of the ground, the corn, the wine and the oil, were gathered in.”<sup>8</sup> Jericho was blessed with water and was able to irrigate crops in the summer, unlike some other regions of Judaea. This evidence proves that Herod was on his way to assist Antony in the month of Ab or Elul.

### The “Winter” of Josephus

Josephus uses a three-season year consisting of spring, summer, and winter, the only seasons he mentions. The summer months, according to this scheme, are roughly from Tammuz (June / July) to Marheshuan (Oct. / Nov.)—or more nearly from late June, beginning with the summer solstice (on or about June 21), to mid-November—a concept of the seasons which is somewhat different than the system to which we are presently accustomed.

Josephus never counts autumn as a season.<sup>9</sup> Rather, his construct extends summer to the beginning of the rains of mid-November (mid-autumn in a

<sup>5</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 1:17:1; that θέρους (*therous*) means “heat,” and therefore by extension “summer,” see SEC, Gk. #2330; GEL, p. 363.

<sup>6</sup> Philo, *Spec.*, 1:35 §183.

<sup>7</sup> Exod., 23:16, 34:22.

<sup>8</sup> DB, p. 667.

<sup>9</sup> The closest thing that we can find in Josephus is the term ὁπώρας (*oporas*), meaning “*the part of the year between the rising of Sirius and of Arcturus* (i.e. the end of July, all Aug., and part of Sept.), *the end of summer*” and “*since it was the fruit-time, it came to mean the fruit itself*” (GEL, p. 564). It is in reference to “fruits,” sometimes rendered “autumn fruits,” that this term is used by Josephus (Jos., *Wars*, 3:3:4, 3:10:8, *Antiq.*, 4:8:21; 19:1:13). Yet the very meaning of the word itself points to the end of summer and not to the autumn. Furthermore, Josephus does not even mention φθινόπωρον (*phthinoporon*) or μετόπωρον (*metoporon*), the proper terms for autumn.

four-season arrangement), at which time he begins winter. Josephus defines this arrangement of the seasons when he writes that when the 15th day of the month of Tishri arrives, “hereafter, the time was τρεπομένου (*trepo-menou*) the winter season.”<sup>10</sup> *Trepomenou* means, “to turn or direct towards a thing,” “to turn one’s steps, turn in a certain direction.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, even though the autumnal equinox had just passed (about Sept. 22), the season is now “turning in the direction towards” winter; i.e., winter was coming near but had not yet arrived. If there had been an autumn in the scheme used by Josephus, and it had just arrived, there would have been no reason to make such a statement; but if winter came in mid-Marheshuan, at the setting of Pleiades (i.e., Nov., 11), his reasoning is in complete harmony.

Josephus also adds definition to his concept of winter while discussing the events surrounding the issue of foreign wives in Judaea and how it was resolved by Ezra and the council. The meeting took place on the 20th day of the 9th month (Khisleu; Nov./Dec.), in Year 7 of Artaxerxes I (457 B.C.E.).<sup>12</sup> Josephus adds that this meeting occurred in “the wintry season of the year.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the LXX of Ezra, 10:9, uses the term χειμῶνος (*kheimonos*), and 1 Esdras, 9:6, uses χειμῶνα (*kheimona*), both terms referring to a “winter-storm.”<sup>14</sup> Khisleu 20 fell on December 7 during that year, a Sabbath day; therefore, well before the winter solstice (on or about Dec. 26).

Josephus’ view of the seasons was not unique. It was held by other people, including many Jews. In the book of Jeremiah, for example, we read that during the 5th year of Yahuyaqim (Jehoiakim), king of Judah, the 9th month, Khisleu, was considered “winter.”<sup>15</sup> The Roman writer Pliny writes:

About 44 days after the autumnal equinox the setting of Pleiades marks the beginning of winter, which it is customary to date on November 11.<sup>16</sup>

This information makes it certain that for Josephus the rainy, wintry season that came with the “setting of the Pleiades—the time of rainfall,” which occurred in the month of Marheshuan,<sup>17</sup> was the true starting point of winter.

There was an excellent reason why many of the Judaean Jews of this period did not utilize the winter solstice (about Dec. 26) as the beginning of

<sup>10</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 3:10:4.

<sup>11</sup> GEL, pp. 815f.

<sup>12</sup> Ezra, 10:9; 1 Esdras, 9:5. Also see the discussion above in Chap. XIV, pp. 208–215.

<sup>13</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 11:5:2–4. There is a scribal error at this point in Josephus. Josephus correctly calls this the “9th month” and states that the Macedonian’s name is “Apellaios,” elsewhere explained by Josephus as the same as the Hebrew month of Khisleu (Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:5:4, 12:17:1). On both counts these are equivalent to the Hebrew month of Khisleu (see Chart B). Nevertheless, some texts of Josephus render the Hebrew name at this point “Tebethos (Tebeth),” which does not agree with the rest of the passage. Some other Greek and Latin manuscripts give “Kselios” and “Sileos” (Marcus, Jos., vi, pp. 384–385, ns. 2 & e). Ralph Marcus and others correct the word at this point back to Khisleu, which is certainly the originally intended month-name.

<sup>14</sup> See Chap. XX, p. 287, n. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Jer., 36:9, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Pliny, 2:47 §125. Also see above Chap. XX, n. 32.

<sup>17</sup> S.O., 4; cf. Jos., *Antiq.*, 13:8:2.

their winter, as most other nations of the world, and even later Jews, did. The winter solstice marked one of the greatest festival periods of the pagan world, which saw this time as the rebirth of the sun. In Rome, for example, the celebration of the Paganalia feasts occurred, which were called the Brumalia and Saturnalia. The tendency of the devout Jew would have been to disassociate himself as much as possible from such idolatrous practices. To start the Jewish winter at the time of these events would draw undue association with them.

### The Winter of 38/37 B.C.E.

In *Antiquities*, 15:1:11–14, and *Wars*, 1:17:4–9, Josephus relates the events that occurred after Herod had returned from Samosata and heard of the death of his brother Joseph.

Antony's expeditionary force against Samosata did not return to Antioch, Syria until late 38 B.C.E., and there seems little doubt that it was the onset of winter that forced Antony to give up the siege. Antony, "after settling some trivial matters in Syria, returned to Athens, and sent Ventidius home, with becoming honors, to enjoy his triumph."<sup>18</sup> Antony is then said to have taken the entire year of 37 B.C.E. in going to Rome and returning to Syria.<sup>19</sup> These details reveal that the "protracted" siege of Samosata must have continued beyond Tishri (Sept./Oct.), shortly following the time when Joseph, the brother of Herod, was killed and at the time that Herod was absent from Judaea. The siege lasted until at least November of that year as winter was settling in. Also, while Herod was off with Antony at Samosata, the region of Galilee revolted from him. The rebels went so far as to drown some of the followers of Herod in Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee).<sup>20</sup>

When the story of Herod opens after the Samosata expedition, Herod was at Daphne, near Antioch, having returned with Antony from the war. Antony shortly thereafter left for Athens at the beginning of the Roman year 37 B.C.E. (Jan. reckoning).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Herod would have returned with Antony to Daphne in late 38 B.C.E. Hearing of his brother's demise at the hands of Antigonus and of the Galilean revolt, Herod immediately set out against his enemies. In a forced march, he came to Lebanon, where he received reinforcements of about 800 men from that region as well as a Roman legion. These traveled with him to Ptolemais. Herod then invaded Galilee.<sup>22</sup>

Herod fought with the rebels in Galilee. After making repeated attacks on their fortress, he was faced with a "severe storm" which for a time halted his progress.<sup>23</sup> In both *Antiquities* and *Wars*, the terms translated as "storm" are found in Greek as *χειμῶνι* (*kheimoni*) and *χειμῶνος* (*kheimonos*), which literally

<sup>18</sup> Plutarch, *Antony*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Dio, 49:22–23.

<sup>20</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:10, *Wars*, 1:17:1–2.

<sup>21</sup> Dio, 49:22–23.

<sup>22</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:11, *Wars*, 1:17:3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

mean “a winter-storm.”<sup>24</sup> This winter-storm reveals that we have reached the winter of 38/37 B.C.E. A few days later Herod was joined by another of Antony’s legions.<sup>25</sup>

Regaining control over Galilee, Herod next moved south and marched on Jericho, capturing it. After he found quarters he entertained a large company of magistrates. No sooner had the banquet ended than the roof of the house fell in, but everyone miraculously escaped death. The next morning 6,000 enemy troops descended from the summits of the hills to fight him. Although Herod won a victory, he was wounded in the battle.<sup>26</sup>

Leaving Jericho, and being joined by many Jews from Judaea, Herod now “ravaged the enemy’s territory, subdued five small towns, slew 2,000 of their inhabitants, set fire to their houses, and returned to camp. His present headquarters were in the neighborhood of a village called Kana.”<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Antigonus had sent his general named Pappus with a large force to Isana in Samaria. After Herod had finished ravaging the enemies’ territory, he turned his attention to the army of Pappus. Here a great battle was fought and Herod proved victorious. He defeated Pappus in open battle and also killed those who fled to the city.<sup>28</sup> Herod would have immediately tried to march on the city of Jerusalem but was detained by yet another “storm of exceptional severity.”<sup>29</sup> Once again Josephus uses the term *χειμῶνι* (*kheimoni*; winter-storm). After the winter-storm abated, Herod moved against Jerusalem:

When the *χειμῶνος* (winter-storm) abated, he advanced upon Jerusalem and marched his army up to the walls, IT BEING JUST NOW THE 3RD YEAR SINCE HE HAD BEEN PROCLAIMED KING IN ROME. (Jos., *Wars*, 1:17:8)

When the *χειμῶνος* (winter-storm) subsided, he removed from there (Jericho) and came near to Jerusalem, encamping close to the city. THIS WAS IN THE 3RD YEAR SINCE HE HAD BEEN MADE KING AT ROME. (Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:14)

These statements are important for dating Herod’s accession to the crown under Roman authority. It was “just now the 3rd year since” Herod had been made king, and it was in the winter. That is, Herod was just now beginning his 3rd year since being elected to the crown. Herod had left for Rome in mid-winter of 40/39 B.C.E. and, as we have already demonstrated, he obtained the kingship in or about mid-February of 39 B.C.E. His 2nd year, therefore,

<sup>24</sup> GEL, p. 884.

<sup>25</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:11, *Wars*, 1:17:3.

<sup>26</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:11f, *Wars*, 1:17:4.

<sup>27</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:12, *Wars*, 1:17:5f. Kana was the camp of Herod, while Isana was the camp of Pappus. The two camps appear to be nearby each other, and not at the same town as some contend (e.g., Marcus, *Jos.*, vii, p. 685, n. g.).

<sup>28</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:12f, *Wars*, 1:17:5–8.

<sup>29</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 1:17:6.

would begin in or about mid-February of 38 B.C.E. and his 3rd year in or about mid-February of 37 B.C.E. (Chart G).<sup>30</sup>

### **“Year 1” of Herod’s Reign at Jerusalem**

Herod reigned 37 regnal years, Nisan reckoning, from the time that he obtained the Judaean crown from the Roman Senate and 34 regnal years, Nisan reckoning, from the year he took Jerusalem and killed Antigonus.<sup>31</sup> This dating requires that Herod be given 3 years prior to the year that he took the Holy City.

This evidence proves that, when Herod arrived outside Jerusalem in or about early March of the year 37 B.C.E., it was the beginning of the 3rd year SINCE Herod had been appointed king of Judaea by the Romans, but it was towards the end of his 3rd year as king of Judaea based upon the Jewish Nisan (Abib) reckoning. The 4th year of Herod, being his 1st year at Jerusalem, based upon Judaean reckoning, began with Nisan 1 of 37 B.C.E.:

**Year 1** = 40/39 B.C.E. Reign recognized at Rome this year  
39/38 B.C.E. 1st year begins mid-Feb., 39 B.C.E.

**Year 2** = 39/38 B.C.E. 2nd year recognized at Rome  
38/37 B.C.E. 2nd year begins mid-Feb., 38 B.C.E.

**Year 3** = 38/37 B.C.E. 3rd year recognized at Rome  
37/36 B.C.E. 3rd year begins mid-Feb., 37 B.C.E.

**Year 4** = 37/36 B.C.E. = **Year 1** from Jerusalem (Nisan reckoning)

Beginning with Nisan 1 of the year 37/36 B.C.E., Herod entered into his 4th Jewish year of being appointed king by the Romans (see Chart G). In turn, “Year 4” from Rome equals “Year 1” at Jerusalem.

The date 37/36 B.C.E., therefore, is supported by the sequence of events. Herod had initially left Syria for Palestine at the beginning of winter (in or about early Dec., 38 B.C.E.). Nevertheless, the numerous events and conflicts which took place before he marched on Jerusalem must have taken several months to accomplish. These episodes would bring us at least into March of 37 B.C.E.

The siege works against Jerusalem were built by Herod and the Romans in the “summer.”<sup>32</sup> The actual siege of Jerusalem lasted 5 months before Herod’s army and the Romans were able to breach the first wall,<sup>33</sup> on the 40th day after

<sup>30</sup> Josephus uses the same method for counting the years of the First Revolt. The revolt started in Iyyar (April/May) of 66 C.E. (Jos., *Wars*, 2:14:4). Nevertheless, Josephus places the month of Nisan (March/April) of 69 C.E., i.e., in the 4th Jewish year of the war (Nisan reckoning), “in the 3rd year of the war” (Jos., *Wars*, 4:9:12), counting the years of this revolt from Iyyar to Iyyar.

<sup>31</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 1:33:8, *Antiq.*, 17:8:1.

<sup>32</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

<sup>33</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 1:18:1.

making an attack.<sup>34</sup> The battle continued another 15 days before the second wall was breached,<sup>35</sup> in the 6th month of the siege.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, in *Antiquities*, 14:16:4, Josephus tells us that the city of Jerusalem was conquered by Herod, "during the consulship of Rome of Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus." The consul date is for 37/36 B.C.E., March reckoning. This evidence proves that the siege and capture of Jerusalem lasted well into the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, making that year the 1st year of Herod, as calculated from the time he conquered Jerusalem.

### Other Evidence for "Year 1" at Jerusalem

More evidence that the 1st year of Herod's reign at Jerusalem began with the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, comes from the following details:

Josephus tells us that the 34-year reign of Herod was reckoned "from the date when, after putting Antigonus to death, he assumed control of the state,"<sup>37</sup> and "from the time when he had put Antigonus to death."<sup>38</sup> Antigonus was put to death shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. Although Antigonus had surrendered to the Romans, Herod sent him off to Antony, who had him scourged and then beheaded.<sup>39</sup> As we have already demonstrated,<sup>40</sup> Herod's last year was 4/3 B.C.E. "Year 1" of his 34-year reign from Jerusalem, therefore, is 37/36 B.C.E.

Josephus notes that Antony had Antigonus beheaded in Antioch, Syria.<sup>41</sup> This information fits well with the statement of Dio's which reports that Antony spent the consul year we describe as 37 B.C.E. (Jan. 1 to Jan. 1 reckoning) going to Italy and then returning to Syria.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Antony was back in Syria before the 1st of January, 36 B.C.E. Antigonus was sent to Antony in about February, 36 B.C.E., towards the end of the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, as we shall prove in our next chapter.

Next, the 7th year of Herod equals the year that Caesar defeated Antony at the battle of Actium. The war between these two monarchs for control of the Roman Empire began in the winter of 32/31 B.C.E.<sup>43</sup> and came to a conclusion with the battle of Actium on September 2 of 31 B.C.E.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, the battle of Actium took place between Caesar and Antony, in the 7th year of Herod's reign, and there was an earthquake in Judaea, such as had not been seen before, which caused great destruction of the cattle throughout the country. (Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:5:2).

<sup>34</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 5:9:4.

<sup>37</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 1:33:8.

<sup>38</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 17:8:1.

<sup>39</sup> Dio, 49:22; Plutarch, *Antony*, 36; Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2-4, 15:1:2, *Wars*, 1:18:3.

<sup>40</sup> See above Chap. XX.

<sup>41</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:1:2.

<sup>42</sup> Dio, 49:23.

<sup>43</sup> Dio, 50:1-51:4.

<sup>44</sup> Dio, 51:1.

Yet while he (Herod) was punishing his foes, he was visited by another calamity—an act of the deity (Yahweh) which occurred in the 7th year of his reign, when the war of Actium was at its height. IN EARLY SPRING an earthquake destroyed cattle innumerable and 30,000 lives; but the army being quartered in the open, escaped injury. (Jos., *Wars*, 1:19:3).

In the early spring (i.e., in the month of Abib [Nisan]) of Herod's 7th year a great earthquake occurred. It happened when the "war of Actium" was at its height and in the year that the "battle of Actium" took place. Since the battle of Actium was fought in September of 31 B.C.E., the 7th year of Herod equals the year 31/30, Nisan (Abib) reckoning. Therefore, "Year 1" of Herod is the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning.

In addition, the end of Herod's 17th year and the beginning of his 18th year occurred at the time when Caesar came to Syria.

And when Herod had completed the 17th year of his reign, Caesar came to Syria. (Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:10:3)

The Roman historian Cassius Dio writes:

Augustus (Caesar), now, after transacting what business he had in Greece, sailed to Samos, where he passed the winter; and in the spring of the year when Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls, he went on into Asia, and settled everything there and in Bithynia. . . . He reduced the people of Cyzicus to slavery because during a factious quarrel they had flogged and put to death some Romans. And when he reached Syria, he took the same action in the case of the people of Tyre and Sidon on account of their factious quarreling. (Dio, 54:7)

The consul year mentioned by Dio is 20 B.C.E. (Jan. 1 to Jan. 1, late Roman reckoning). Therefore, Caesar came to Syria in the spring of 20 B.C.E., which was at the end of the 17th year (the 12th month of the Israelite year being Adar [Feb./March]) and at the beginning of the 18th year of Herod (the 1st Jewish month being Nisan [March/April]). The end of Herod's 17th year and beginning of his 18th year, as a result, had to take place in the spring of 20 B.C.E. This fact makes Herod's 17th year 21/20 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, and his 18th year 20/19 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. His 1st year of rule at Jerusalem, in turn, is 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20:10:5, also makes this following report:

Now those who held the high priesthood FROM THE TIME OF HEROD UP TO THE DAY ON WHICH TITUS CAPTURED AND SET FIRE TO THE

TEMPLE AND THE CITY numbered 28 in all, covering a period of 107 years.

Titus set the Temple and city on fire in the "2nd year of Vespasian on the 8th of the month of Gorpiiæus,"<sup>45</sup> i.e., September, 70 C.E. The year 70/71 C.E., Nisan reckoning, therefore, is the 107th year from the time that Herod began to appoint the high priest (which he did immediately after ascending to the throne at Jerusalem).<sup>46</sup> "Year 1," accordingly, equals the year 37/36 B.C.E.

These facts are further upheld by the Talmudic work *Abodah Zarah*, which claims that the dynasty of Herod lasted 103 years.<sup>47</sup> This dynasty ended with the revolt of the Jews against Agrippa in the month of Artemisius (Iyyar; April/May), 66 B.C.E.<sup>48</sup> The year 66/67 C.E., Nisan reckoning, being the 103rd year, makes the year 37/36 B.C.E. Herod's 1st year.

## Conclusion

The evidence is clear and concise. Herod received authority as king from the Romans in or about February of 39 B.C.E. (the year 40/39 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning). Near the beginning of the 3rd year since receiving this authority from the Roman Senate, i.e., in early March, 37 B.C.E., Herod and his Jewish army came against Jerusalem. He was later joined by Sosius (Sossius) and his Roman legions. Together they laid siege and took Jerusalem in the latter part of the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. This same year also represents Herod's 1st year as king of Judaea at Jerusalem. From this time the events of his reign were numbered. On or about Abib 7, in the year 4/3 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, Herod died—his 37th year as king from his appointment by the Romans and his 34th from his capture of Jerusalem.

In this chapter we also noticed that crops were being grown in Jericho in mid-summer of the year 38/37 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. This fact reveals that the year 38/37 B.C.E. was most definitely not a Sabbath year. More importantly, the fact that crops were still being grown AFTER Pentecost (early June) of 38 B.C.E., forbidden in the pre-Sabbath year under oral Talmudic Law of the Pharisees and in legal force since the latter part of the 2nd century B.C.E.,<sup>49</sup> also indicates that the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, was not a Sabbath year. This detail is reinforced by the fact that Herod's army contained many Jewish soldiers who saw no problem with laying siege against Jerusalem that year, a thing that would have been impossible if that year was a Sabbath. Once more, the evidence proves that the approaching Sabbath year was 36/35 B.C.E.

<sup>45</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 6:10:1–7:1:1.

<sup>46</sup> Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:2:1–4.

<sup>47</sup> B. A. Zar., 8b.

<sup>48</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 2:14:4, *Antiq.*, 20:11:1, 20:12:1; cf. *Wars*, 1:5:2, *Antiq.*, 13:16:1–3.

<sup>49</sup> Shebi., 1:1, 2:1.