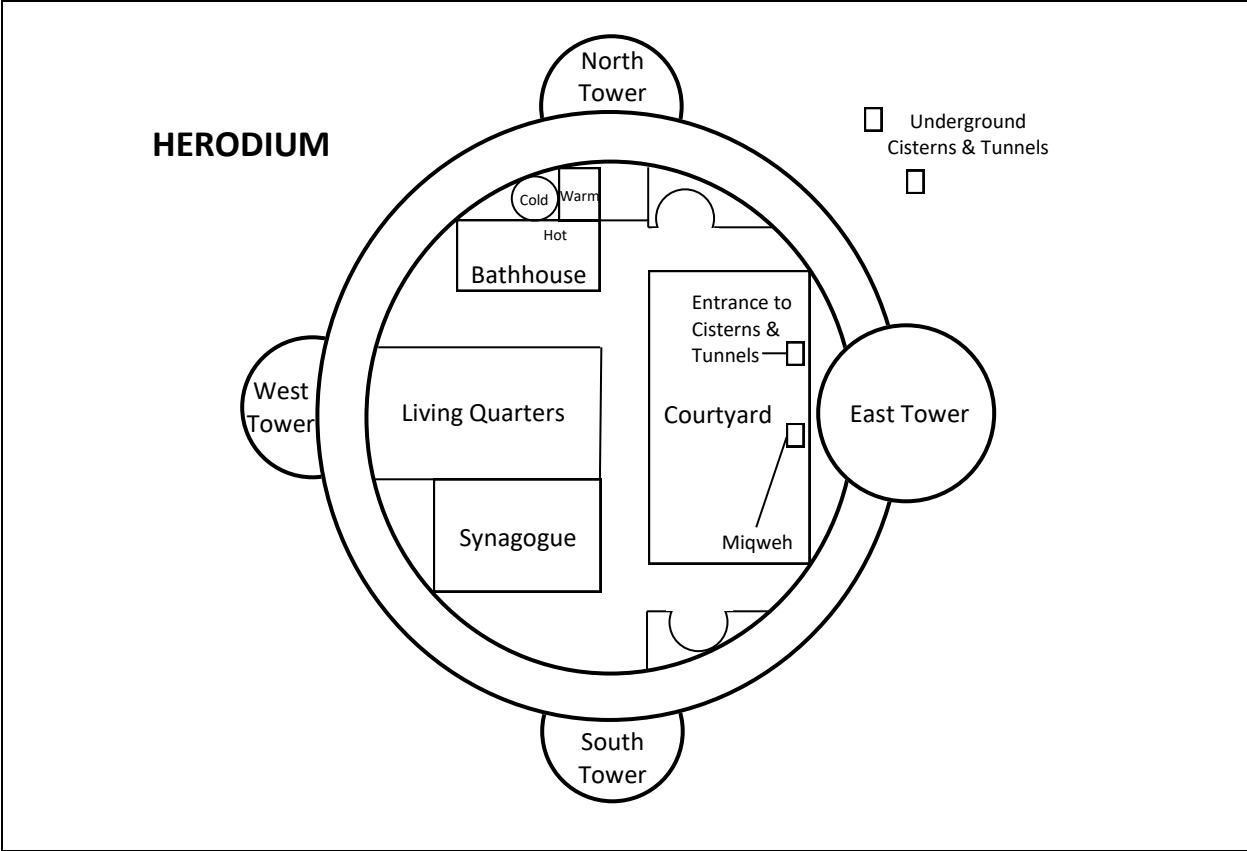


HERODIUM

Located about 3.5 miles southeast of Bethlehem and 8 miles south of Jerusalem, Herodium (or Herodion) was a desert fortress named after its builder, Herod the Great. Although this site is not mentioned in the New Testament, it does appear in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus. Between 24 and 15 B.C., King Herod built Herodium at a location where he had once won a victory over the Parthians when fleeing south to Masada (Josephus *Antiquities* 14.14.7-8; *Wars* 1.13.8). The fortress was built on a hill that is now shaped like a volcano. It served as a summer palace as well as an administrative center for the area. When Herod died in 4 B.C., his body was transported in royal procession to Herodium, where he was buried. He was carried on a bier made of gold and precious stones and covered with purple cloth. His large family, great army, and numerous servants were in attendance (*Antiquities* 17.8.3; *Wars* 1.33.8-9). Later, in the First Jewish Revolt, rebels sought refuge from the Romans at Herodium (as well as Machaerus and Masada), but they were ultimately defeated in A.D. 71 (*Wars* 7.6.1). A similar thing occurred during the Second Jewish Revolt.



Herodium



The fortress was built into the top of the hill, and the administrative center was located in the northwestern plain below (*Wars* 1.21.10; see the schematics in McRay, 131; Murphy-O'Connor, 323). Upper Herodium was in the shape of an oval, having four towers—one at each point of the compass. These extended above the hill and were connected by a retaining wall. The eastern round tower was the largest; the other three were semi-circles.



East Tower of the Fortress



Living Quarters (Viewed from Above)



Walls of Living Quarters

The living quarters at Herodium were located on the western side of the fortress. In the southwest corner of the fortress, a dining hall was built. During the First Jewish Revolt (which began in A.D. 66), it was converted into a synagogue for the zealots who lived there. The synagogue was destroyed in A.D. 71 and never rebuilt. It is one of the few synagogues from before A.D. 70 that has been discovered in Israel. (Other synagogues from this period include the ones from Gamla, Magdala, and Masada.)



Synagogue Used by Zealots

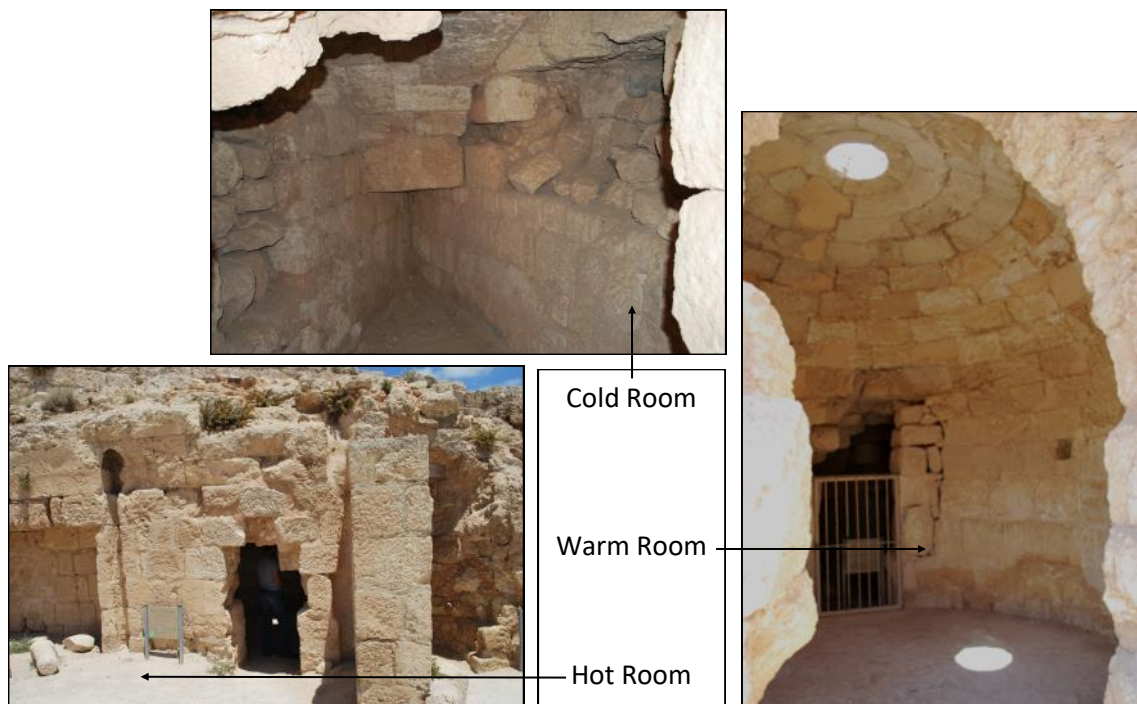


Street Between the Courtyard and the Synagogue

A Roman bathhouse was located on the northwest side of the fortress. It had a cold room (*frigidarium*), a warm room (*tepidarium*), and a hot room (*caldarium*).



Roman Bathhouse





Ritual Bath on the East Side of the Courtyard

On the east side of the courtyard, one can find a ritual bath (*miqveh*). This was probably added by the Jewish zealots during the First Revolt for the sake of ceremonial purity.

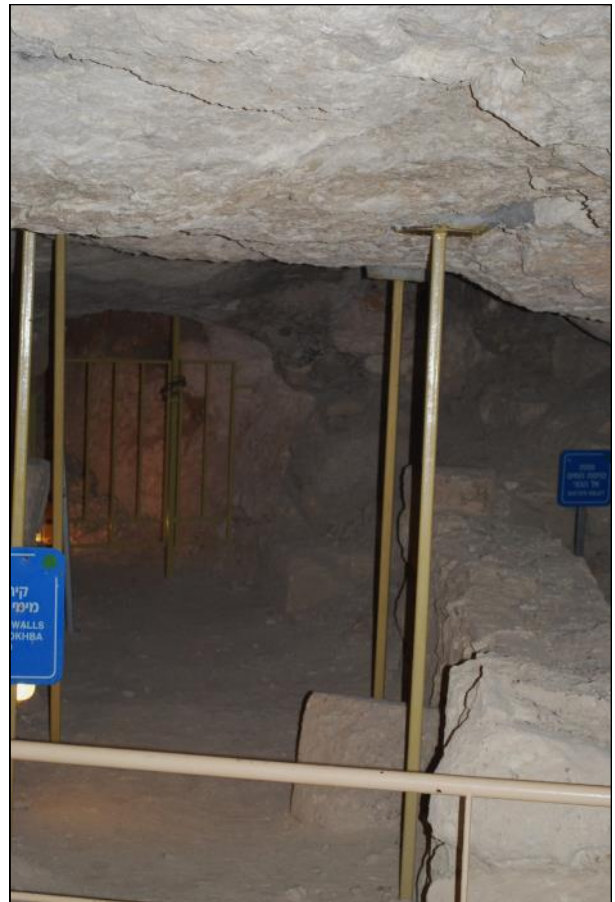
The entrance to a series of underground cisterns and tunneling can also be found on the eastern side of the courtyard. Much of the tunneling was completed during the time of the Second Jewish Revolt, which was led by Bar Kokhba (A.D. 132-135).



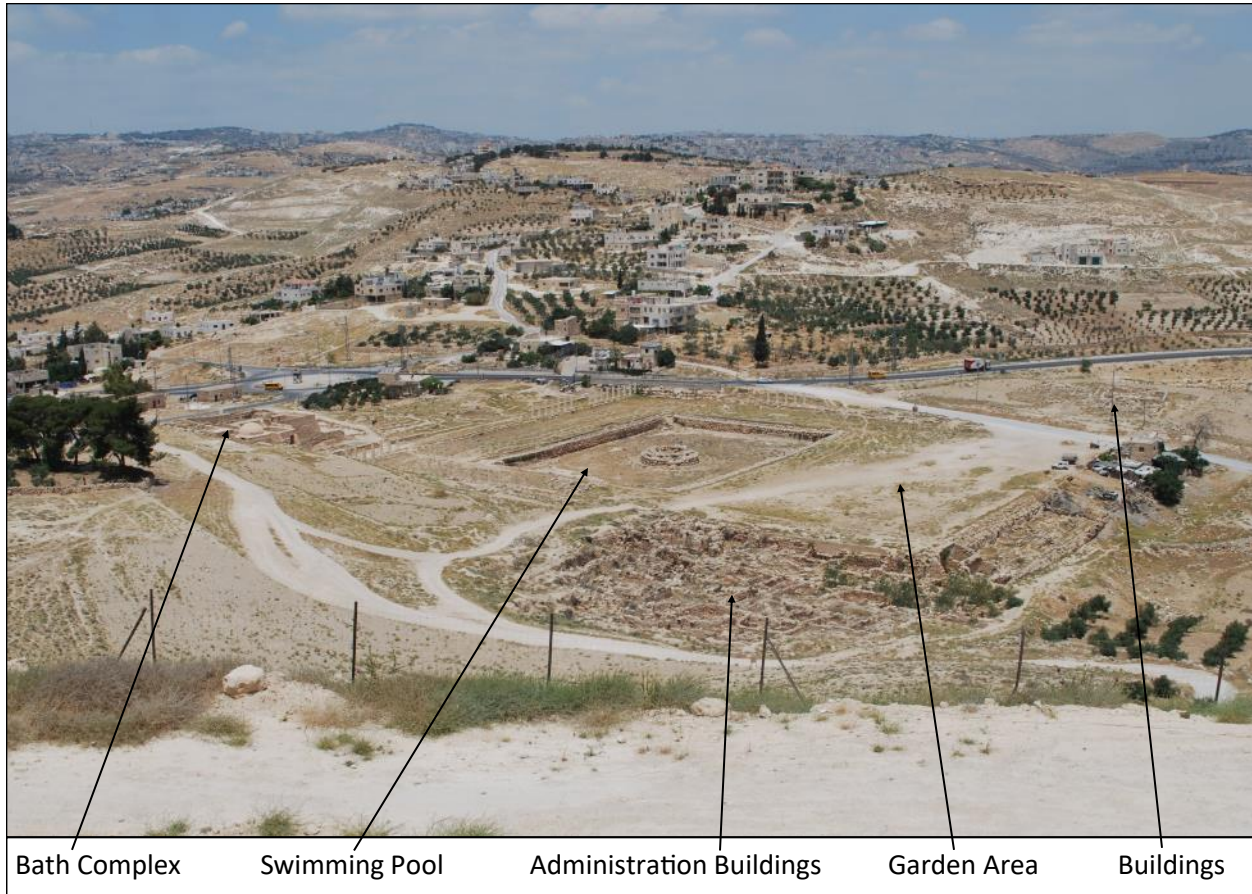
Tunnel and Water Inlet



Tunnels and Cisterns



Lower Herodium, which was to the northwest of the hill, had administration buildings, a palace, a bath complex, a stadium, and a large swimming pool. The pool was supplied by an aqueduct.



Bath Complex



Large Swimming Pool with Circular Pavilion

For many years, as a result of Josephus' account, archaeologists have searched at Herodium for the tomb of Herod the Great. In 2007, Ehud Netzer reported that he had discovered Herod's tomb. Herod's sarcophagus was made from red limestone and decorated with rosettes on the end. Two other coffins were found which likely belonged to Herod's relatives. A model of the mausoleum is on display on the hillside of Herodium.



Reconstruction of Herod's Sarcophagus
(Israel Museum, Jerusalem)



Model of Herod's Mausoleum

In addition to Herod's tomb, a small 450-seat theater was later discovered with a royal theater box.



Little Theater



Excavations

Area of Excavations
on the Side of Herodium
in 2012





Stones for Warfare Between the Romans and the Jews

One artifact discovered at Herodium that has drawn more recent attention is the Pilate ring. It was actually unearthed in 1969, but its significance was not realized until 2018. Thorough cleaning and advances in imaging revealed the name *Pilato* in Greek. However, it is doubtful that the Roman prefect Pilate would have personally worn this thin ring, which was made from copper alloy. Instead, the signet ring would have been used by one of his regional administrators to stamp items being sent to the governor. The form *Pilato* is dative, meaning “to/for Pilate.” If it were Pilate’s personal ring, the inscription would have read the nominative form *Pilatos* (“Pilate”) or the genitive form *Pilatou* (“of Pilate”). The Pilate ring, along with the Pilate stone found at Caesarea Maritima, corroborate the historicity of Pontius Pilate, the governor who sentenced Jesus to death (Mt. 27:1, 2, 11-26; Mk. 15:1-15; Lk. 3:1; 23:1-25; Jn. 18:28—19:16; Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28; 1 Tim. 6:13).