

Chapter XVIII

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 I).

As we have already shown, it took only seven days for Herod to receive his Judaeian crown from the Romans and then leave Rome to return to Judaea. He obtained this crown in the consulship for the year 40/39 B.C.E. (March reckoning), approximately between late January and mid-February. 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, then Joppa, came to Masada, and Rhesa, and then marched on to Jerusalem. Here he was joined by his Roman ally Silo. Since during winter it would take at least a month to six 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 snow storm.” He finally ordered his own men into their winter quarters. This evidence shows 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.

- 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 and killed Pacorus. This was also the year that Antony besieged Samosata and afterwards appointed Sossius (Sosius) governor of Syria.

Pacorus and the Parthians were defeated on June 9, 38 B.C.E.¹ 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.²

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 Commagene, at least six to eight 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.”³

- 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.⁴

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.

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 corn-crop ἐν ἀκμῇ τοῦ θεύρους (in the height of heat [i.e. summer]).”⁵

This mid-summer corn-crop (wheat crop) must not be confused with the spring corn (barley) harvest. Philo, for example, places the Feast of Weeks,

¹ Eutrop., 7:5, cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 6:465 (under the heading of 6:249). Also see HJP, 1, p. 283.

² PHP, p. 119.

³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 34:4.

⁴ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:8–9, *Wars*, 1:16:7.

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

which is held in early June, “in the middle of spring,” at which time, he adds, “comes the corn (barley) harvest.”⁶ Josephus, on the other hand, speaks of Samson setting fire to “the crops already ripening for harvest” during the “summer.”⁷ In another place he records that the ark of the covenant was returned to the Israelites in “the summer season when all were out in the corn fields to gather the crops.”⁸

That there was a corn crop (wheat crop) in the midst of summer is also verified by the story found in 1 Samuel, 12, where Yahweh sent forth a storm during the time of the harvest so unusual that it was perceived as a sign by those who observed it.⁹ Josephus describes this storm as “θέρους ἀκμῆ χειῶνα (a winter-storm at the height of summer).”¹⁰ The mid-summer corn-crop, therefore, refers to a crop that came to fruitage sometime AFTER the spring harvest of June and at the height of summer heat.

Since the corn-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 months come before Tishri (Sept./Oct.), the month of ingathering for the late harvest—the Feast of Tabernacles, which fell at that time, also being dubbed the “Feast of Ingathering” on that account.¹¹ 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.”¹² 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 what we are presently accustomed to.

Josephus never counts autumn as a season.¹³ Rather, his construction extends summer to the rains of mid-November (late fall in a four season arrangement), at which time he begins winter. Josephus defines this arrange-

⁶ Philo, *Spec. Laws*, 1:35(183).

⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 5:8:7(295), the summer wheat harvest; cf. Judg., 15:1–5.

⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 6:1:3(14); cf. 1 Sam., 6:11–14.

⁹ 1 Sam., 12:17–18.

¹⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 6:5:5.

¹¹ Exod., 23:16, 34:22.

¹² DB, p. 667.

¹³ The closest thing that we can find in Josephus is the term ὀπώρας (*oporās*), 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 fall. Further, Josephus does not even mention φθινόπωρον or μετόπωρον, the proper terms for autumn.

ment of the seasons when he writes that when the fifteenth day of the month of Tishri arrives, “hereafter, the time was τρεπομένου (*trepo-menou*) the winter season.”¹⁴ Trepo-menou means, “to turn or direct towards a thing,” “to turn one’s steps, turn in a certain direction.”¹⁵ 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 harmony.

Josephus also adds definition to his concept of winter while discussing the events surrounding the issue of alien wives in Judaea and how it was resolved by Ezra and the council. The meeting took place on the 20th day of the ninth month (Khisleu; Nov./Dec.), in year seven of Arta-xerxes (457 B.C.E.).¹⁶ Josephus adds that this meeting occurred in “the wintry season of the year.”¹⁷ Likewise, the LXX of Ezra, 10:9, uses the term χειμῶνος (*kheimonos*), and 1 Esdras, 9:6, uses χειμῶνα (*kheimona*), terms which refer to a winter-storm.¹⁸ Khisleu 20 fell on December 8 of the Julian calendar during that year; therefore, well before the winter solstice (on or about Dec. 21).

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 fifth year of Yahuyaqim (Jehoiakim), king of Judah, the ninth month, Khisleu, was considered “winter.”¹⁹ 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 11.²⁰

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,²¹ was the true starting point of winter.

There was an excellent reason why many of the Judaeans of this period did not utilize the winter solstice (about Dec. 21) as the beginning of 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

¹⁴ Jos., *Antiq.*, 3:10:4.

¹⁵ GEL, pp. 815f.

¹⁶ Ezra, 10:9; 1 Esdras, 9:5. Also see the discussion above in Chap. XI, pp. 160ff.

¹⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 11:5:2–4. There is a scribal error at this point in Josephus. Josephus correctly calls this the “ninth 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 G). Nevertheless, some texts of Josephus render the Hebrew name at this point “Tebethos,” 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 and e). Marcus and others correct the word at this point back to Khisleu, which is certainly the originally intended month-name.

¹⁸ See Chap. XVII, p. 233, n. 27.

¹⁹ Jer., 36:9, 22.

²⁰ Pliny, 2:47(125). Also see above Chap. XVII, p. 233, n. 32.

²¹ S.O., 4; cf. Jos., *Antiq.*, 13:8:2.

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."²² Antony is then said to have taken the entire year of 37 B.C.E. in going to Rome and returning to Syria.²³ 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).²⁴

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).²⁵ 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. He then invaded Galilee.²⁶

In Galilee Herod fought with the rebels. After making repeated attacks on their fortress he was faced with a "severe storm" which halted his progress for a time.²⁷ In both *Antiquities* and *Wars*, the terms translated as "storm" are in Greek χειμῶνι (*kheimoni*) and χειμῶνος (*kheimonos*), which literally mean "a winter-storm."²⁸ 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.²⁹

²² Plutarch, *Antony*, 34.

²³ Dio, 49:22–23.

²⁴ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:10, *Wars*, 1:17:1–2.

²⁵ Dio, 49:22–23.

²⁶ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:11, *Wars*, 1:17:3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ GEL, p. 884.

²⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:11, *Wars*, 1:17:3.

Regaining control over Galilee, Herod moved south and marched on Jericho where he captured the place. After he found quarters he entertained a large company of magistrates. No sooner had the banquet ended when 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. Though Herod won a victory, he was wounded in the battle.³⁰

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.”³¹

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 the enemy in open battle and also killed those who fled to the city.³² Herod would have immediately tried to march on the city of Jerusalem, but was detained by yet another “storm of exceptional severity.”³³ Once again Josephus uses the term χειμῶνι (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 THIRD 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 THIRD 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 third year since” Herod had been made king, and it was in the winter. That is, Herod was just now beginning his third 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 second year, therefore, would begin in or about mid-February of 38 B.C.E. and his third year in or about mid-February of 37 B.C.E. (Chart I).³⁴

³⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:11–12, *Wars*, 1:17:4.

³¹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:12, *Wars*, 1:17:5–6.

³² Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:12–13, *Wars*, 1:17:5–8.

³³ Jos., *Wars*, 1:17:6.

³⁴ 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 fourth Jewish year of the war (Nisan reckoning), “in the third year of the war” (Jos., *Wars*, 4:9:12), counting the years of this revolt from Iyyar to Iyyar.

“Year 1” of Herod’s Reign at Jerusalem

Herod reigned 37 Jewish regnal years from the time that he obtained the Judaeian crown from the Roman Senate and 34 Jewish regnal years from the year he took Jerusalem and killed Antigonus.³⁵ This dating requires that Herod be given three Jewish 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 third year SINCE Herod had been appointed king of Judaea by the Romans, but it was towards the end of his third year as king of Judaea based upon the Jewish Nisan (Abib) reckoning. The fourth year of Herod, being his first year at Jerusalem, based upon Judaeian reckoning, began with Nisan 1 of 37 B.C.E.:

- Year 1** = 40/39 B.C.E. (Nisan) Reign recognized at Rome this year
39/38 B.C.E. First year begins mid-Feb., 39 B.C.E.
- Year 2** = 39/38 B.C.E. (Nisan) Second year recognized at Rome
38/37 B.C.E. Second year begins mid-Feb., 40 B.C.E.
- Year 3** = 38/37 B.C.E. (Nisan) Third year recognized at Rome
37/36 B.C.E. Third year begins mid-Feb., 37 B.C.E.
- Year 4** = 37/36 B.C.E. = **Year 1** from Jerusalem (Nisan)

Beginning with Nisan 1 of the year 37/36 B.C.E., Herod entered into his fourth Jewish year of being appointed king by the Romans (see Chart I). 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.”³⁶ The actual siege of Jerusalem lasted five months before Herod’s army and the Romans were able to breach the first wall,³⁷ on the fortieth day after making an attack.³⁸ The battle continued another fifteen days before the second wall was breached,³⁹ in the sixth month of the siege.⁴⁰

Further, 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 first year of Herod, as calculated from the time he conquered Jerusalem.

³⁵ Jos., *Wars*, 1:33:8, *Antiq.*, 17:8:1.

³⁶ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

³⁷ Jos., *Wars*, 1:18:1.

³⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jos., *Wars*, 5:9:4.

Other Evidence for “Year 1” at Jerusalem

More evidence that the first 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,”⁴¹ and “from the time when he had put Antigonus to death.”⁴² Antigonus was put to death shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. Though Antigonus had surrendered to the Romans, Herod sent him off to Antony, who had him scourged and then beheaded.⁴³ As we have already demonstrated,⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ Therefore, Antony was back in Syria before the first 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 seventh 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.⁴⁷ and came to a conclusion with the battle of Actium on September 2 of 31 B.C.E.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the battle of Actium took place between Caesar and Antony, in the seventh 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).

But while he (Herod) was punishing his foes, he was visited by another calamity—an act of the deity (Yahweh) which occurred in the seventh 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 seventh year a great earthquake occurred. It happened when the “war of Actium” was

⁴¹ Jos., *Wars*, 1:33:8.

⁴² Jos., *Antiq.*, 17:8:1.

⁴³ Dio, 49:22; Plutarch, *Antony*, 36; Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2–4, 15:1:2, *Wars*, 1:18:3.

⁴⁴ See above Chap. XVII.

⁴⁵ Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:1:2.

⁴⁶ Dio, 49:23.

⁴⁷ Dio, 50:1–51:4.

⁴⁸ Dio, 51:1.

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 seventh 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.

Further, the end of Herod’s seventeenth year and the beginning of his eighteenth year occurred at the time when Caesar came to Syria.

And when Herod had completed the seventeenth 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 seventeenth year (the twelfth month of the Israelite year being Adar [Feb./March]) and at the beginning of the eighteenth year of Herod (the first Jewish month being Nisan [March/April]). The end of Herod’s seventeenth year and beginning of his eighteenth year, as a result, had to take place in the spring of 20 B.C.E. This fact makes Herod’s seventeenth year 21/20 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, and his eighteenth year 20/19 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning. His first year of rule at Jerusalem, therefore, 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 “second year of Vespasian on the eighth of the month of Gorpiaeus,”⁴⁹ i.e. September, 70 C.E. The year 70/71 C.E., Nisan reckoning, therefore, is the 107th year from the time that Herod

⁴⁹ Jos., *Wars*, 6:10:1–7:1:1.

began to appoint the high priest (which he did immediately after ascending to the throne at Jerusalem).⁵⁰ “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.⁵¹ This dynasty ended with the revolt of the Jews against Agrippa in the month of Artemisius (Iyyar; April/May), 66 B.C.E.⁵² The year 66/67 C.E., Nisan reckoning, being the 103rd year, makes the year 37/36 B.C.E. Herod’s first 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 third 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 Sossius (Sosius) 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 first 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 second century B.C.E.,⁵³ also indicates that the year 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, was not a sabbath year.

⁵⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:2:1–4.

⁵¹ B. A.Zar., 8b.

⁵² Jos., *Wars*, 2:14:4, *Antiq.*, 20:11:1, 20:12:1; cf. *Wars*, 1:5:2, *Antiq.*, 13:16:1–3.

⁵³ *Shebi.*, 1:1, 2:1.