

Chapter XIX

The Month Herod Conquered Jerusalem

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

The events that transpired between the time that Herod conquered Jerusalem until the arrival of the new sabbath year were of short duration. In order to completely verify that the year 36/35 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, was the approaching sabbath year to which Josephus refers to in *Antiquities*, 15:1:2, we must next deal with the specific month in which Herod mastered the city.

Conquest on a Fast Day

According to *Antiquities*, 14:16:4, the city of Jerusalem fell to Herod, “in the 185th Olympiad, the third month, on the DAY OF THE FAST, as if it were a recurrence of the misfortune which came upon the Jews in the time of Pompey, for they were captured by Sosius ON THE VERY SAME DAY, 27 YEARS LATER.”

It has been argued that Josephus was using a pagan source which confused the weekly sabbath day with a fast day.¹ This theory is advanced on the basis that Dio refers to the day that Pompey conquered Jerusalem as “on the day of Kronus (Saturn),”² the day generally identified by pagans with the Jewish sabbath. Meanwhile, Strabo states, “Pompey seized the city, it is said, after watching for the day of fasting, when the Judaeans were abstaining from all work.”³ The combination of the statement “the day of Kronus” with the idea of “abstaining from all work,” so the theory goes, means that the day in question was really a weekly sabbath which the pagans had confused with a fast day.

In the first place, sacred fast days, such as the Day of Atonement, were days dedicated to Yahweh. The Day of Atonement was a special fast in that it too was a high sabbath, and like any weekly sabbath, the observer was required to abstain from work.⁴ Other fast days, meanwhile, were special days but not required sabbaths. Nevertheless, when such fasting was done on a national level, abstaining from work was the natural result.

In pagan Greek and Latin works Yahweh was identified with Kronus (Saturn), this chiefly because the Jews refused to give out the almighty’s sacred name, but also because the seventh day of the week was known to Greeks and Romans as the day of Kronus/Saturn. Even today we call the sabbath day Satur-day from Saturn.⁵ It was on the seventh day that the Jews

1 E.g. HJP, 1, pp. 239f, n. 23.

2 Dio, 37:16.

3 Strabo, 16:2:40.

4 Lev., 16:29–34, 23:27–32; Num., 29:7.

5 RHCD, p. 1171.

worshiped and honored their deity; thus, in the minds of the pagans, Kronus/Saturn was the deity of the seventh day.⁶

But the Scriptures sanctified other days as well, including the two high sabbaths of Passover, the Feast of Weeks, two high sabbaths of the Feast of Tabernacles, and so forth, as well as the fast day called the Day of Atonement. All of these (except for the Feast of Weeks) were sabbath days which could fall on any day of the week.⁷ Likewise, a national fast day dedicated to Yahweh by the Jews could fall on any day of the week. Though these fast days did not require a sabbath, one would naturally abstain from working to attend prayer services and participate in other dedication ceremonies.

Since national fast days were dedicated to Yahweh, it is obvious that these days would also be considered days of Kronus/Saturn in the eyes of the pagans, i.e. days dedicated to the Jewish deity. That Dio would refer to a fast day of the Jews as a day of Kronus, therefore, does not mean that he thought it was the seventh day of the week (sabbath).

Further, it would seem impossible that Josephus, a Jewish priest himself, would not have known the difference between a weekly sabbath and a fast day. That Josephus would have misidentified both the day that Pompey and the day that Herod took Jerusalem, calling them fast days rather than weekly sabbaths, is just too incredulous. His association of these two great defeats of Jerusalem “on the same day” shows that he clearly knew what day he was talking about.

The very fact that even the pagan Strabo notes that the Jews were fasting on the day Pompey took the city is evidence enough that we are dealing with a fast and not a weekly sabbath, or even a high sabbath (which, except for the Feast of Weeks, could fall on any day of the week).

The fast day on which Pompey took Jerusalem could not have been a sabbath day because Pompey purposely restrained from combat with the Jews on the sabbath. Pompey knew quite well that the Jews would only perform combat on a sabbath if attacked. By not attacking them on the sabbath day Pompey found he could create a lull in the war which allowed him to build his siege works.⁸ On the other hand, there was no Jewish restriction against going to war on a fast day (except for the Day of Atonement, which is a high sabbath). Pompey could expect to find the Jews in a physically weakened condition and less able to fight.

Herod and his Jewish army, likewise, would not have pressed against Jerusalem on a sabbath day, for the simple reason that they were Jews. Jews did not commit themselves to battle on the sabbath unless attacked. Yet even the most pious of the Jews could attack an enemy on almost any one of their fast days. Though it is true that the Jews supporting Herod might have been somewhat weakened themselves from fasting, it is also a fact that the Jews who had been living behind the walls of Jerusalem had been, for several months, in want of food. A morning attack by Herod’s forces would have found his army in excellent physical condition, having been well-fed during

⁶ E.g. Dio, 49:22; Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5:4.

⁷ That the Feast of Weeks always fell upon the first day of the week see our forthcoming book entitled *Yahweh’s Sacred Calendar*.

⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:4:2f, *Wars*, 1:7:3.

the siege. Those defending Jerusalem, on the other hand, would have been near total fatigue.

Which Fast Day?

There were six fixed fast days in ancient Judaea during this post-exile period: one, the Day of Atonement, is found in the Pentateuch from the days of Moses and is the only fast that is also a sabbath. Four others arose after the destruction of the first Temple in 587 B.C.E. These are described in the book of Zechariah as “the fast of the fourth (month), and the fast of the fifth (month), and the fast of the seventh (month), and the fast of the tenth (month).”⁹ The sixth and final one is called the Fast of Esther. It was at first only a day of celebration and did not become a fast until post-Talmudic times. These last five fasts were observed as national days of dedication in remembrance of great calamities that surrounded important events in Jewish history. More specific dates for these six fasts are as follows:

- “The fast of the fourth (month)”¹⁰ commemorated the overthrow of the city of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.¹¹ This event occurred on the ninth day, in the fourth month of the year.¹² The fourth month is called Tammuz (June/July).

- “The fast of the fifth (month)”¹³ was observed because on the tenth day of the fifth month Nebuchadnezzar’s army destroyed and burned the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.¹⁴ The fifth month is called Ab (July/Aug.).

- “The fast of the seventh (month),”¹⁵ also called “Zom Gedalyah (the Fast of Gedaliah),” was celebrated on the third day of that month in the memory of the slaying of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah, and his associates after the destruction of the city.¹⁶ The seventh month is called Tishri (Sept./Oct.).

- The Day of Atonement occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month.¹⁷ This fast is the only one of the six post-exile fast days which is ordained in the Pentateuch. Unlike the others, it is also a commanded sabbath. Since Herod’s Jewish forces would not attack on a sabbath, the Day of Atonement must be eliminated from consideration.

- “The fast of the tenth (month).”¹⁸ This fast was held on the tenth day of the tenth month in memory of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.¹⁹ The tenth month is called Tebeth (Dec./Jan.).

⁹ Zech., 8:19.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ EJ, 6, p. 1195.

¹² Jer., 39:1–2, 52:6–7; 2 Kings, 25:1–4; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:8:2.

¹³ Zech., 7:3–5, 8:19.

¹⁴ Jer., 52:1–14; EJ, 6, p. 1195. Cf. Chap. XXVIII, p. 339, n. 7.

¹⁵ Zech., 8:19.

¹⁶ EJ, 6, p. 1195.

¹⁷ Lev., 16:29, 31, 23:27–32; Num., 29:7.

¹⁸ Zech., 8:19.

¹⁹ 2 Kings, 25:1–2; Jer., 52:4ff; Ezek., 24:1–2; EJ, 6, p. 1195.

- The Fast of Esther, celebrated on the thirteenth of Adar (Feb./March), the day before Purim.²⁰ Adar is the twelfth Jewish month.

To more precisely pinpoint which fast day and month that Herod took the city we next need to examine the sequence of events for Herod during this siege.

When Herod first arrived, he encamped with his army before the wall of the Temple at the same place where Pompey had attacked before. It was “just now the third year since he had been proclaimed king in Rome,” i.e. shortly after mid-February or early March of 37 B.C.E.²¹

Herod then appointed several tasks for his army, including the cutting down of trees and shrubs, the raising of three lines of earthworks, and the erection of towers on them. Leaving his lieutenants in charge, Herod next left Judaea and went to Samaria where, making “his wedding an interlude of the πολεμίους (*polemiou*, i.e. war),”²² he married the daughter of Alexander.²³ We are not directly told how long this interlude lasted but, as we shall prove, Herod did not return to Jerusalem until July of 37 B.C.E.

After the interlude and the wedding, the Roman general Sossius (Sosius) arrived at Jerusalem with an army to assist Herod’s forces. At the same time, Herod also returned from Samaria with “a larger force” than he had formerly stationed at the city, numbering about 30,000 troops. Both Herod’s army and the army of Sossius then assembled before the walls of Jerusalem and took up their positions.²⁴

The arrival of the Roman army at Jerusalem to assist Herod begins the five months of περικαθεζομένης (*perikathezomenes*; i.e. “to sit all round,” “to blockade,” or siege)²⁵ spoken of in Josephus, *Wars*, 1:18:2. It was at this point, after Herod’s interlude in the war, that the siege seriously got underway. This five month period ended when “some of Herod’s picked men ventured to scale the wall and leapt into the city, followed by Sossius’s centurions.” In Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14:16:2, we are told that, “The first wall was taken in 40 days” of battle. Therefore, the first three and one half months of this five month siege (being a joint effort of both Herod’s forces and the Romans) were spent in building the siege works before the actual battle began.

The end of the interlude also represents the beginning of the six month period described by Josephus in *Wars*, 5:9:4. He writes, “Herod, son of Antipater, BROUGHT UP SOSSIUS, and Sossius a Roman army, BY WHOM THEY (the Jews of Jerusalem) WERE FOR SIX MONTHS INVESTED AND BESIEGED, until in retribution for their sins they were captured and the city was sacked by the enemy.” The end of this period represents the preparation

²⁰ Esther, 4:16; EJ, 6, p. 1195.

²¹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:14, *Wars*, 1:17:8.

²² GEL, p. 653.

²³ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:15:14, *Wars*, 1:17:8.

²⁴ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:1, *Wars*, 1:17:9.

²⁵ GEL, p. 627.

²⁶ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

time and the additional fifteen days of battle beyond the five months it took for Herod's forces to scale the second wall.²⁶

Take special note of the fact that the six months of siege are specifically said to have begun only when Herod "BROUGHT UP SOSSIUS," not when Herod first arrived!

Raids were made by the Jews defending Jerusalem against the construction of the siege works and against food supplies used by the aggressors. Herod took steps to stop the raiders. Meanwhile, "the three lines of earthworks had been raised with ease, for there were a great number of hands now continuously at work, and IT BEING SUMMER (when the construction was taking place), there was no hindrance to their erection either from the weather or from workmen."²⁷ It is important to notice that the "great number of hands" working on the earthworks refers to the large number of troops now present—the force Herod originally left in front of the wall at this time being reinforced by the Roman army and the 30,000 new soldiers brought in by Herod following the interlude in the war.

With the siege works made, Herod's army "brought up their engines and battered the wall, trying every expedient." Those inside the city, though, devised good counter devices and even fought well underground where they met their enemy in the mines that were being dug. Five months after the Romans joined the siege, on the 40th day after making an attack, the first wall was breached.²⁸ The second wall was taken after another fifteen days of battle, in the sixth month of the siege.²⁹ The "environs of the Temple" were first secured, and "when the outer precincts of the Temple and the Lower City had been captured, the Jews (defending the city) fled into the inner precinct of the Temple and the Upper City."³⁰

At this point a great slaughter took place. The Romans were "infuriated by the length of the siege" and the Jews of Herod's army were determined to leave none of their opponents alive. Antigonus surrendered. Herod then brought the rampaging Roman soldiers under control and saved the Temple.³¹

After mastering the city, Herod rewarded those who had espoused his cause, murdered the partisans of Antigonus, and stationed guards at the gates and walls of the city. Valuables were stripped from the dead bodies found in the city and Sossius, after dedicating a crown of gold to Yahweh and after Herod had paid the Roman soldiers, withdrew from Jerusalem. At this point, Herod, who was in desperate need of money, began plundering:

And there was no end to their (the Jews of Jerusalem) troubles, for on the one hand their greedy master (Herod), who was in need (of money), was plundering them, and on the other hand the seventh (sabbatical) year, which was approaching, forced them to leave the land unworked, since we are forbidden to

²⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2, *Wars*, 1:18:1–2.

²⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2, cf. *Wars*, 1:18:2.

²⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2, cf. *Wars*, 5:9:4.

³⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2, *Wars*, 1:18:2–3.

³¹ *Ibid.*

sow the earth in that year. (Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:1:1–2; cf. Jos., *Wars*, 1:18:3)

If we apply four seasons to the year, the three months of summer in the Jewish calendar are roughly Tammuz (June/July), Ab (July/Aug.), and Elul (Aug./Sept.). In reality, as already demonstrated, throughout the works of Josephus the year was divided into three unequal seasons: spring, summer, and winter; which are the only seasons he mentions. In this latter case the summer months would be roughly Tammuz, Ab, Elul, Tishri (Sept./Oct.), and part of Marheshuan (Oct./Nov.). It is very probable that Josephus determined the beginning of summer with the summer solstice (about June 21), though his winter did not begin until mid-November. To be on the conservative side, allowing for every possibility, we shall assume that Josephus began his summer with the summer solstice (about June 21). The month of Tammuz (July), the fourth Hebrew month, began in that year on June 30. Using either the first of Tammuz or the summer solstice as the start of Josephus' summer will allow for the earliest possible date for Herod to begin his siege.

In Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14:16:2, it took 40 days to take the first wall and fifteen more to take the second; a total of 55 days (disregarding any preparation time in between the two battles). Therefore, the entirety of the last two months of the siege were spent in direct battle. This means that the earthworks and siege works took the first three to four months of the siege to construct (counting from the time that the Romans arrived outside the walls of Jerusalem).

In one of the four months of summer the building of siege works began. This point is clear when Josephus, in a direct reference to the arrival of the Roman army and Herod's new troops, states that "the three lines of earthworks had been raised with ease, for there were a great number of hands now continuously at work, and IT BEING SUMMER, there was no hindrance to their erection either from the weather or from the workmen."³²

To allow room for all possibilities, if we assume, in an effort to push the starting date as far back as possible, that the earthworks project began on the first day of the first full month of summer, i.e. Tammuz 1, the fourth month of the Jewish year, then the end of six months (at least five months, fifteen days) from this point would be about the fifteenth of Khisleu (Nov./Dec.), the ninth month of the Jewish year. If we count from the summer solstice, that year Siwan 22 (June 21), five months and fifteen days brings us to Marheshuan 22 (Nov. 16).

Going even so far as to consider that by the phrase "six months" Josephus meant five months and one day total siege time, from the first day of the summer solstice (June 21)—counting the entire month of Siwan (May/June), the third Hebrew month, which for the most part falls in spring, as the first month of the siege—until the end of this five month, one day period, it would bring us from the first day of Siwan to the first day of the eighth month (Marheshuan; Oct./Nov.), which in that year fell on October 26.

³² Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

It is clear from this evidence that the fast days observed in the fourth (Tammuz) and fifth (Ab) months are impossible as the fast day upon which the city of Jerusalem fell to Herod. These details also eliminate the two fast days of the seventh month, Tishri, since the siege could not have ceased until after the beginning of the eighth month. It most definitely did not fall on the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, since that day was a Jewish High Sabbath and the Jews in Herod's army would not have participated in the battle.

Further, there is another good reason that the city could not have fallen in Tammuz (June/July) or Ab (July/Aug.) as some scholars argue.³³ If the city would have fallen either in Tammuz or Ab the siege works would have been built in the spring, not in the summer as testified to by Josephus.

This data also reveals that the sabbath year did not officially begin with the first of Tishri of 37 B.C.E., as those adhering to systems "B" and "C" contend. The sabbath year was still approaching after Herod took the city and there is no way he could have possessed the city until after the month of Tishri was over.

Neither could the city have been taken on one of the two fast days of the seventh month, as many others conclude,³⁴ and still have the New Year begin with the first of Tishri. If Herod had taken the city on the fast day of either Tishri 3 or 10, after the supposed New Year began, how could the sabbath year still be rapidly approaching, as Josephus tells us?³⁵ The Day of Atonement, which falls on Tishri 10, is eliminated anyway, since it is also a sabbath day. Herod would not have led a Jewish army to battle on this day.

The Fast of Esther in the twelfth month, the month of Adar (Feb./March), meanwhile, is far too late in the year. For this date to be correct the siege works would have been built in the winter, not the summer. More importantly, though it was celebrated in the first century as a festival, it was not observed as a fast until the post-Talmudic period.³⁶ That leaves us with the fast of the tenth month, the month of Tebeth (Dec./Jan.).

The Interlude

We now must factor into this equation Herod's "interlude of the war," at which time he went to Samaria to gather a larger army and to marry the daughter of Alexander. The question naturally arises, "Why did Herod allow for an interlude?"

Dio resolves our problem for us. Dio comments that Sossius, Herod's Roman ally, had been appointed governor of Syria and Cilicia at the same time that Herod returned to Syria with Antony. Sossius then had to subdue "the Aradii, who had been besieged up to this time and had been reduced to hard straits by famine and disease." Only after his victory over the Aradii did he conquer "in battle Antigonos, who had put to death the Roman guards that

³³ MGWJ, 1855, pp. 109–115; Marcus, *Jos.*, vii, pp. 700f, n. d; etc.

³⁴ E.g., V. Lewin, T. Gardthausen, G. F. Unger, etc.; see the bibliography in HJP, 1, pp. 284f, n.11.

³⁵ *Jos., Antiq.*, 15:1:2.

³⁶ Marcus, *Jos.*, vi, p. 454f, n. c.

³⁷ Dio, 49:22.

were with him, and reduced him by siege when he took refuge in Jerusalem."³⁷ Therefore, Herod had to wait for Sossius to establish himself in Syria and to solve the Arad problem before he could expect Roman assistance. This detail explains why Herod set some soldiers to work outside the walls of Jerusalem while he made an "interlude in the war" against Antigonus. After he finished this interlude, Herod marched back to Jerusalem bringing with him an even greater army. It was at this very moment that Sossius and his Roman military force made their appearance. It is clear that Herod had no intention of pressing the siege of Jerusalem until the Roman reinforcements were available. He merely bade his time until their arrival.

The Reign of Antigonus

Another historical detail that guides us in our understanding of when Herod and Sossius actually began their siege of Jerusalem comes with the length given for the reign of Antigonus, the rival of Herod for control of the Judaeen state. Josephus writes:

Then Barzabanes and Pacorus, the rulers of Parthia, crossing the Euphrates, made war on Hyrcanus, captured him alive, and appointed Antigonus son of Aristobulus, king; and when he had reigned three years and three months Sossius and Herod besieged him, and took him. When he had been taken to Antioch, he was slain by Antony.³⁸

This passage, when read closely in the Greek, indicates that Antigonus reigned three years and three months until Sossius and Herod began to besiege him (not until he was captured by them). His first year started when Barzabanes and Pacorus defeated Hyrcanus. Josephus places this event at the time when the Jews were observing the Feast of Pentecost (early June).³⁹ The Roman historian Dio places this war during the consul year of Gnaeus Calvinus, serving for the second time, and Asinius Pollio, i.e. 40 B.C.E. (Jan. reckoning). The years accredited to Antigonus, as a result, are as follows:

40/39 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning = Year 1

39/38 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning = Year 2

38/37 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning = Year 3

37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning = Year 4

Nisan (March/April), Iyyar (April/May), and Siwan (May/June) of 37 B.C.E., therefore, represent the three months of Antigonus' reign (during

³⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 20:10:4.

³⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:13:3-4, *Wars*, 1:13:1-11.

the first part of his fourth year) counted to him before Sossius and Herod began the siege which eventually brought Antigonos down. This detail in turn means that Sossius and Herod started their siege in the fourth month, i.e. in Tammuz (June/July) of 37/36 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning (see Chart I).

The Third Month of the Olympiad

One of the most puzzling things said by Josephus in relationship to the conquest of Jerusalem—first of Pompey’s and then later of Herod’s—is the statement that both victories occurred on the same day, the Fast day in the “third month.”

• Pompey’s conquest: “And indeed when the city was taken, IN THE THIRD MONTH, on the Fast Day, in the 179th Olympiad, in the consulship of Gaius Antonius and Marcus Tullius Cicero (etc.).”⁴⁰

The first year of the 179th Olympiad was 64/63 B.C.E., July reckoning (Attic system), or 64/63 B.C.E., November reckoning (Macedonian system). The consul year is 63 B.C.E.

• Herod’s conquest: “This calamity befell the city of Jerusalem during the consulship at Rome of Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus, in the 185th Olympiad, IN THE THIRD MONTH, on the day of the Fast, as if it were a recurrence of the misfortune which came upon the Jews in the time of Pompey, for they were captured by Sossius on the VERY SAME DAY, 27 years later.”⁴¹

The last year of the 185th Olympiad was July 1, 37 until July 1, 36 B.C.E. (Attic reckoning) or Dius (Nov.) 1, 37 B.C.E. until Dius 1, 36 B.C.E. (Macedonian reckoning). The consul year is 37 B.C.E.

Josephus points out that the siege itself lasted six months,⁴² five months in duration just from the time that Herod returned from his wedding until the first wall was taken.⁴³ Further, Josephus reports that the building of siege works was not undertaken until “summer.” After that they took 40 days to take the first wall and 15 days to take the second.⁴⁴ A four season year for the Jewish calendar would consist roughly of the three months of Tammuz, Ab, and Elul. Even if we start the five months of siege with the first of Tammuz (June/July), we are brought to a date beyond the first of Khisleu (Nov./Dec.).

The statements of Josephus are considered by many present-day chronologists as making absolutely no sense. In the first place, the third month cannot refer to the length of Herod’s siege, for the siege lasted at least five months and some days. Second, it is clear by both statements that the third month has to do with the Olympiad in which the siege took place: i.e. in the 179th Olympiad of Pompey’s conquest and in the 185th Olympiad of Herod’s conquest.

⁴⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:4:3.

⁴¹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:4.

⁴² Jos., *Wars*, 5:9:4.

⁴³ Jos., *Wars*, 1:18:1–2.

⁴⁴ Jos., *Antiq.*, 14:16:2.

Solomon Zeitlin long ago came to this same realization. He writes:

The third month cannot mean the third month of the siege, as Josephus states elsewhere that the city fell after a siege of five to six months. It cannot refer to the third month of the Hebrew calendar, as it is placed together with the Olympian year. It can therefore only mean in the third month of the Olympian year of the 185th Olympiad, and it must furthermore be the Olympian year of the Macedonian calendar.⁴⁵

Though Zeitlin errs by misplacing the siege of Herod in January of 37 B.C.E. (he fails to consider the mentioning of a passing summer in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14:16:2), his direction is correct. The third month cannot refer to the Hebrew third month, Siwan (May/June), or the Attic-Olympiad third month, Boedromion (Aug./Sept.), because these dates are far too early in the year and there are no fast days in them. The Attic-Olympiad, for example, which starts in July, would make the siege of Herod and Sossius begin with spring and would also place the three months of siege work building almost wholly in the spring.

Furthermore, Josephus uses the month-names from the Macedonian calendar throughout his works and not the Attic Greek, indicating that he must have been correlating his views with a Macedonian perspective in mind.

Years ago G. F. Unger proved that there existed two systems of the Olympiad calendar, the Attic and the Macedonian.⁴⁶ Solomon Zeitlin writes of the Macedonian system:

The Macedonian Olympiad calendar, on the other hand, is a modified form of the original Olympiad calendar which was adopted in the Macedonian period, and was adopted by them in accordance with their established system of dating the new year. These peoples being accustomed to date the beginning of their year in autumn, that is, in THE MONTH OF DIUS (NOVEMBER), they also fixed the new year of their adopted Olympiad calendar according to their traditional custom. Local divergences then ensued.⁴⁷

In short, beginning with Dius, the third month in the Macedonian Olympiad calendar is Audyneus (Dec./Jan.). It is equivalent to the Hebrew month of Tebeth.⁴⁸ Though we find fault with the year given as Zeitlin's final conclusion, he nonetheless correctly saw that Josephus had used the Macedonian Olympiad calendar. He writes:

⁴⁵ JQR, 9, p. 93.

⁴⁶ SPP, pp. 300–316; JQR, 10, p. 58.

⁴⁷ JQR, 10, p. 58.

⁴⁸ See Chart G.

The third month is thus the month of Audyneus, which corresponds to December and January, i.e. the Hebrew month Tebet.⁴⁹

That Josephus used a November Olympiad reckoning is further verified by his dating of the battle of Actium, which took place on Sept. 2, 31 B.C.E.⁵⁰ Josephus places this event within the 187th Olympiad.⁵¹ Attic reckoning for the 187th Olympiad would place this event between July of 32 and July of 31 B.C.E., which is impossible. The Macedonian Olympiad, on the other hand, places the event between Nov. of 32 and Nov. of 31 B.C. E. and agrees with the known evidence.

Conclusion

Based upon the evidence, we must conclude that the conquest of Jerusalem by both Pompey and Herod the Great took place on the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tebeth (or Tebet), a national fast day for the Jews of that period. The chronology of the siege can be reconstructed as follows:

- On or about Be-Adar 1 (March 4), 37 B.C.E.:⁵² Herod arrived outside the walls of Jerusalem after his winter campaign against Galilee, his conquest of Jericho, and his victory over Pappus at the battle of Isana. Assigning different tasks to his troops, Herod left Jerusalem to go to Samaria to celebrate his marriage with Mariamme.
- From about Be-Adar 1 (March 4), until about the eighteenth of Tammuz (July 17): Herod allows an interlude in the war while he waits for the arrival of the Roman army, which is busy at the time settling affairs in Syria. He uses this interlude to marry Mariamme and to collect an even larger military force.
- About the eighteenth of Tammuz (July 17), the first full month of summer: Herod returns from Samaria and the Roman troops under Sossius arrive to assist in the siege. The five and six month periods of the siege mentioned by Josephus now begin.
- From about the eighteenth of Tammuz (July 17) until the seventh of Marheshuan (Nov. 1): Herod's Jewish army and the Roman Legions under Sossius raise three lines of siege works in the "summer."
- From about the eighth of Marheshuan (Nov. 2), Sunday, until about the eighteenth of Khisleu (Dec. 11), Thursday: In 40 days Herod and Sossius attack and then take the first wall. The eighteenth of Khisleu also ends the five month siege spoken of in Josephus, *Wars*, 1:18:2.

We begin this 40 day period with the first day of the week, the most probable time to begin a siege by Jewish soldiers after a period of preparation. It

⁴⁹ JQR, 9, pp. 93f.

⁵⁰ Dio, 51:1.

⁵¹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 15:5:1. Also see our discussion above in Chap. XII, p.176.

⁵² The year 38/37 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, ended with an intercalary month (Be-Adar); see Chart G.

would be highly unlikely that Herod would have started the siege a day or two prior to a sabbath, since the Jewish soldiers would not fight on a sabbath and this would disrupt the flow of the battle.

After Herod took the first wall, one can estimate about a week of preparation time before he attacked the second wall: From about the nineteenth of Khisleu (Dec. 12), Thursday, until Khisleu 25 (Dec. 18), Wednesday.

- From the twenty-sixth of Khisleu (Dec. 19th), Thursday, until the tenth of Tebeth (Jan. 2), Thursday: In fifteen days Herod and Sossius attack and then take the second wall.

- The tenth of Tebeth (Jan. 2), Thursday, 36 B.C.E., a fast day: Jerusalem falls into the hands of Herod after a long siege lasting six months.⁵³

⁵² Jos., *Wars*, 5:9:4.