

# Was Herod, in Fact, Megalomaniac?

Following Kasher and Witztum's New Book

*King Herod: a Persecuted Persecutor\**

Ehud Netzer

Archeologo

A new aspect of Herod life is featured in a new book written by two scholars, the historian Aryeh Kasher and the psychiatrist Eliezer Witztum, in which the influence of Herod's psychological-mental setup, on his extensive activity, plays a major role. A major theme in this book is the assumption that the surroundings in which Herod grew up and his status as being «half a Jew», played an important role in the development, within him, of a deep inferiority complex, followed by a paranoid state which caused, among other consequences, the construction of huge building projects, under a megalomaniac drive.

Our own intimate knowledge of Herod's building projects has brought us, independently, to the conclusion that Herod was extremely calculated as to any aspect of his building activity, practically without any sign of megalomania, in this area. Even those cases, which featured monumentality, carried on good reasons behind, not caprices. (see Netzer 1980, 2008) It seems to us that the fundamental assumption in Kasher & Witztum's book (= K&W), as to Herod's education, asks for revision. In an equal degree of assumption, one might imagine that Herod grew up, free of inferiority or hate towards the Hasmoneans or competition with them.

Herod's position dramatically changed once Jerusalem was captured in 40 B.C.E., by the Parthians following an agreement they did, with M. Antigonus who was now nominated by them to be the king of Judea. Herod, with his sharp political senses (inherited from his father, Antipatros) immediately escaped to Rome, where he was nominated by the Roman senate to be their nominated king of Judea. It took him three years of fierce battles, but once Herod got hold of Judea, he faced two prob-

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lems: *firstly*, as he have not been born to a priestly family, he could not serve as the High Priest as his predecessors did; and *secondly*, the constant danger that at any moment, the Romans might nominate a descendent of the Hasmonean family to rule over Judea. Ultimately, Herod ruled over his kingdom for 33 years, which expanded and flourished in these years, during which he managed to accomplish his extensive building program.

Herod's cruelty is a well know fact, and no doubt, once he became older he was less predictable. Yet, this characteristic is not visible in his vast building project. Some of his projects served stately functions, such as the construction of Caesarea's harbor; others feature personal (at least partially) needs, such as the construction, on the fringe of the Temple Mount but outside the holy territory, the vast *stoa basiliea*, an honorable location; this to compensate a king who was not a priest and lacked any special status in the Temple itself and its surrounding courts (the *azarah*). In any event, in most of his building projects we do observe, under one roof, royal, personal and security functions.

Herod's vast building project clearly features his deep personal understanding in the area of building and the deep satisfaction he achieved in its realization. In any event, we don't observe here any signs of inferiority, predominance, or gratifying to the Romans and not less important, any expression of megalomania. We cannot point to any of his projects as being built without a good reason behind, or as a result of irrational motives such as megalomania. Did Herod develop in the course of his life, in particular his last years, mental distortions or even paranoia? However, one exception might be, implemented a few years before his death – the construction of the artificial hill at Herodium.

As to the education Herod gained during his childhood and adolescence; according to Kasher & Witztum, Herod apparently got his education, among other Edomien youngsters in Ashkelon, were he developed inferiority feelings toward the Hasmoneans. This assumption, lacking any proof behind, seems to us most questionable. Antipas, Herod's grandfather, was nominated during the reign of the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus, to be the governor (*Epitropos*) of Edomeia, a nomination which expresses a high degree of confidence, by the Hasmoneans, to an Edomite, a tribe who not long before was forced by John Hyrcanus I to become Jewish. Antipater (Antipas son and Herod's father), served as a very influential advisor of John Hyrcanus II, Jannaeus' eldest son. Can one see in this background a source of inferiority feelings or hate that the young Herod could have developed against the Hasmoneans? In any event, why should his family send him to be educated far away from the capital, while Jerusalem, the only metropolis in Judea, could no doubt offer him excellent

educators? In the same manner that Antipas and his family apparently lived in Jerusalem there might have been other Edomite families that moved their dwelling to the capital. There is no reason why Antipater, Herod's father, did not pay attention to prepare his children for a political career (he could even bring teachers from other cities, especially for this task).

The sharp political senses Herod featured during his realm point towards the interest in which he followed up the occurrence in the royal court and the surrounding world. It seems to us, therefore, that the picture drawn of him as being a "child" during the first 20 years of his life (K&W, 29) reflects neither the reality, nor the common sense. The fact that Herod, already in a relative early stage of his life was nominated to be the governor of the Galilee, is a testimony to the proper education he received, as well as to a lot of self confidence. We doubt if at this stage he suffered from inferiority feelings or others.

We shall now dedicate most of our attention to Herod's building projects discussed in Kasher & Witztum's book; we shall do it in the order presented by the latter. But at first we would like to define what does megalomania means, in the area of building and architecture. Architecturally speaking, from our point of view, megalomania might be designated in the following five perimeters:

1. Construction in a scale which is much larger than the logic one;
2. construction in an illogical, absurd location;
3. involvement of unneeded functions with the buildings;
4. use of building materials, beyond the logic or common needs;
5. amount of decorations, beyond the logic or common habits

### **Masada (K&W, 116-118)**

«Josephus Flavius ties the construction of Masada with the danger Herod have faced following the rivalry between him and Cleopatra VIII, and there is a place for the assumption that the work on this mountain commenced with this danger in the background. What seems to us unrealistic is to tie the beginning of this work with a meeting with Marcus Antonius, Herod was due to have in Laudacia» (K&W, 116). One cannot really tie a complex of buildings, which needs a lot of preparations, with one diplomatic meeting.

According to Kasher & Witztum's book, once this meeting was over, the continuation of the work at the site was albeit meaningless, and the constructions on the hill, from now on, «...were apparently intended to answer his emotional needs, that is, whims of Herod himself – and this, of all times, in a period of power and security»

(K&W, 117) Two arguments were not taken here into account:

1. Masada is an ultimate natural fortress, the best location, from defense point of view, among all the fortresses built by the Hasmoneans or later by Herod. After all, Herod has personally experienced the advantages of the rock of Masada, as a fort, without any added fortifications; in particular in the year 40 B.C.E., while his family survived the siege laid out by Antigonus and his people.
2. The unique quality of the landscape around Masada was no doubt one of the main sources of inspiration to built the first group of palaces on the mountain (the Western Palace and buildings Nos. 11, 12, and 13), and later the famous, Northern Palace.

I have already claimed that the construction of the Northern Palace, on top of three natural terraces, was a project in which the scaffold builders demonstrated their ability, and coped with the natural rocks, without sacrificing the life of many builders, as it seems at a first glance (Netzer 1980, 2008). We do not see any justification, not from the view point of courageous and not of the palace's size, to view it as an expression of megalomania (Tsafrir 1980).

Only a few visitors have reached regularly this remote edifice, with its palaces, probably official representatives, or family members, if not for a visit *per se*, on their way to En Gedi, Zto'a'r, Machaerus, or even to the Nabatean kingdom. This, in contrary to the large numbers of visitors to the palaces at Jericho or Herodium, which were meant to accommodate and entertain and dozens and even hundreds of guests every year. It does not contradict the option of Herod, while planning Masada, considering the possibility of VIPs, even in rare occasions, visiting the site, in particular the Northern Palace. However, from the outset, it probably meant to be used (as a resort) mainly by him and his close family members.

The building of Masada in phases, the meticulous planning, and the logic thought, which were implemented at Masada during the years, points as well towards the different needs which developed during the years. The only sort of "luxury" at Masada is the casemate wall, which was built in the last, third building phase around 15 B.C.E. It could either point towards exaggerated fears of the Nabateans, or from enemies within his kingdom. It could also reflect personal problems in that, relatively late stage of his life.

However, when we read that: «The huge scale and extreme grandeur of Masada and most of his other projects can be understood as an expression of grandiose exhibitionism and political might, which in turn reflected the need to compensate for profound feelings of inferiority» (K&W, 118).

It seems that viewing the construction of Masada as the result of a deep inferiority feelings, seems totally unrealistic to anyone who knows all aspects of Masada by itself and on the back ground of Herod's building projects in general.

### **Antonia (K&W, 128-131)**

«The detailed description of the fortress (BJ V, 146, 149, 238-246) leaves no room for doubt that he intended to make it one of the most important strongholds in Jerusalem and, at the same time, demonstrate his "greatness from birth". The source from this ostentatious description, like others in a similar vein, was most likely Nicolaus of Damascus; but one can also infer that it was written to please Herod and his inspiration. Such an undertaking clearly reveals his pretensions to grandeur, as evidenced by the colossal dimensions and breathtaking splendor of the citadel» (K&W, 129-130).

Featuring Herod's «greatness from birth» is after all a literati expression, and in fact does not mean too much. Right, from the description of the building (see our recent article in *Eretz-Israel* 28, 2007) including the comparison to Herodium's fortified palace, the Antonia was a most impressive edifice. It contained, among others, a large royal wing; however, the «pretensions to grandeur» we would prefer to change into «essential need», in particular at the beginning of his career, stood the need to built a firm base in the capital, in particular at a point which controls the Temple Mount from above, without the need to be inside.

### **Herodium (K&W, 181-184)**

A huge gap exists between Kasher & Witztum's point of view and ours, as to the motivation behind the erection of Herodium. In our conception, Herod would have never built this huge complex here, if he would not took upon him a commitment, a sort of a vow, to be buried here – an isolated, unknown area, on the fringe of the Judean Desert – all of this as the result of three events he experienced, during less than one day, in 40 B.C.E. The need to solve the dilemma, he himself created in his own hands, ultimately brought up the genius solution – of combining together, in "nowhere", a huge Summer Palace together with a monument which could be seen from Jerusalem, the capital. To the best of our judgment, there is nothing of megalomania behind this genius idea.

We have no doubt that if he would not have made such a commitment/vow, the result of a the trauma he faced in 40 B.C.E., his tomb would have been built on a prominent location at the fringe of the capital, such as the knoll outside Damascus

Gate, on top of which, a few years later, Herod himself built a mausoleum for his family members. Furthermore, we believe that the huge summer palace at Herodium would have never been built, there, or elsewhere in his kingdom, if he would have not tied himself to this site by a sort of a vow. After all, the palace at Jericho could have fulfilled, in a similar manner, the entertaining of large numbers of family members and friends. But once the decision of building Herodium was made, this complex of palaces (the largest of its kind in the contemporaneous Roman Empire, Herodium) it got his full attention. No doubt, since the inauguration of the site and at least to the death of Herod, the site was full of activity; family members, privileged Jerusalemites, etc., entertaining themselves in its various installations.

Herodium was not built in order to memorize a big victory in the nearby fields, in 40 B.C.E. According to Josephus, it was barely a real battle (as discussed by Kasher & Witztum in their book, 64), but Herod's big achievement was his survival; the commitment to built the site was the fruit of the trauma that the three events in one day has caused: 1) the escape from Jerusalem (probably accompanied by a lot of inner tension); 2) the accident the mother faced, with the excitement that followed it (it seems that Herod's nerves were still on their edge, as a result of the escape-operation); and 3) the victory over the followers of Antigonus in the battle-field. [Kasher & Witztum, as well, mentions three traumatic events (*ibid.*, 64), somehow they don't count the escape from Jerusalem, during the night as an "event" but they do separate the accident of the mother and the attempt to commit suicide, as two different traumatic events].

Furthermore, Herod zealously kept, to our mind, his own name only to be used at this site, in order to give it more authority and significance to its erection on the fringe of the desert. Herod could easily name Samaria or Stratot-Tower after himself, or one of the architectural pearls he built during the years and named after Roman leaders, friends and family members. Nevertheless, he did kept the name Herodium solely to the site near Bethlehem, in order to give it the full attention and honor. To our mind, "Herodium" in the Peraea, beyond the Jordan (mentioned only once in Josephus...) either never existed, or alternatively, its name was given after Herod's death to a nameless, remote military post, built by him, and there are few candidates to such a site.

The construction of the major complex at Herodium was implemented, more or less, simultaneously with Jerusalem's main palace (ca. half a day of walk between the two). It is therefore most probable that there was a sort of coordination between the teams working in both sites; for example, while the team of wall builders build a new wing at Herodium, a team, of fresco painters decorated a wing which have

just been built, in Jerusalem. On the other hand we do not see a direct connection between the construction of Herodium and those of Samaria-Sebaste and Caesarea (*ibid.*, 181). In any event, once these two large palaces were implemented, Herod was free to concentrate on his two major projects: the Temple Mount and Caesarea with its harbor.

The analysis of the extensive palace wings, at Herodium, features the large number of Herod's family members, friends and other tenants that he was able to entertain here. An outstanding, but rare visit of a VIP like Marcus Agrippa, in any event should not reflect an outstanding high standard, higher then that of the Hasmonean palaces or the other palaces of Herod, as we know them personally, or the domiciles exposed in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem; we therefore speak on an regular luxury, not in particular made to satisfy VIP guests like Marcus Agrippa (The erection of the royal theater at Herodium, apparently built in the occasion of Agrippa's visit, might have been an exception).

### Stadia and Theaters – in Jerusalem and Jericho (K&W, 184-187)

There is no justification to link Herod's activities in Jerusalem directly with those of Jericho – each city with its own characteristics and status. Jerusalem, the capital, a bustling city, was crowded a few times every year with thousands if not dozens of thousands of pilgrims, whereas the garden city of Jericho, developed during the Days of the Second Temple to be an extensive and vivid winter resort, with a much smaller population and activity (in particular during the hot summers). One can not compare the massive building activity in Jerusalem, being the capital, with that at Jericho. Here, at the oasis, blessed with prosperous agriculture (royal, as well as private) and the basis for a winter resort – Herod's building activity was limited, as far as we know, to his winter palace (built in three stages) and the combined theater-hippodrome-gymnasium edifice (unique in its kind in the whole classic world), both featuring no signs of megalomania. The latter, by the way, was mainly built of abode, and there is no signs of it irritating the local population or the palace dwellers.

Although we can not proof it, it seems to us that the theater-hippodrome-gymnasium was built close to the inauguration festivities at Caesarea. The idea behind it might have been the taking of the advantage of the temporary presence of many athletes and horse and chariot contestants, coming from far away, and giving them a sort of a bonus (in the form of a pleasant winter sojourn at Jericho), to the benefit of the local seasonal population. This might have been Herod's personal idea in the same manner as the combination of a theater, a hippodrome and a gymnasium, featuring a creative imagination.

Jointly with the discussion of Stadia and Theaters, Kasher & Witztum discusses the import of luxury productions from abroad: «The “imports” extended to Roman construction and architectural plans as well, including Roman-style architectonic ornamentation, bathhouses, palaces, porticoes, frescoes, mosaics, and the like. These were obviously intended to be awe-inspiring, even if he himself never used or rarely visited them. It was enough for him to impress such high-ranking personalities as Marcus Agrippa, on his visit to the kingdom in 15 B.C.E.» (K&W, 187). True, a Roman team (apparently sent to Judea after Agrippa's visit there in 15 B.C.E., as an homage to Herod, the great builder) took part in the construction of Herod's Third Palace at Jericho, including wall decorations and gardening. The same team also took part in the construction of Herod's family mausoleum in Jerusalem and apparently a temple in Banias. However, we would like to make two important remarks:

1. Decorations with fresco, stucco and mosaics were a common phenomenon in the domiciles of the well to do people and the palaces in Eretz-Israel also prior to Herod's days. The Hasmonean Winter Palaces at Jericho featured abundance of such decorations; on top of it, these palaces were crowded with lavish gardens and swimming pools, featuring of their daily routine (megalomania?).
2. There should be no doubt that the palaces built by Herod were built for the intensive use of him and his family members, but at the same time also for state administrative purposes. The three palaces built gradually by Herod at Jericho expresses the gradual growth of the different needs. The second palace was not more decorated than the first one, but larger and more sophisticated. The third palace as well expresses growing needs; but here, it seems, Herod took the opportunity of the Roman team that was sent to Herod's kingdom right after the visit of Marcus Agrippa, in 15 B.C.E. (see above).

The assumption that the Herod's building projects at Jericho were built to spite the Hasmonean (K&W, 185) has no base to depend on. As already was mentioned above, the palaces were not built solely to serve the royal family but also state affairs, including the entertaining of large crowds (a testimony to it are the huge *triclinia* revealed), either those who seasonally stayed at Jericho, or those who came especially from Jerusalem for such occasions.

Does the style of life practiced here in Herod days differ much from that of the Hasmoneans, who maintained the site just before him? Not really. This is mainly reflected in the archaeological finds and a little bit also in Josephus' books. In any event, Josephus, who described very briefly the palaces at Jericho, but much more in detail those of Jerusalem and Herodium, did not really describe the way of life within

the palaces, not here at Jericho and not elsewhere. There is no reason not to assume, in particular in reference to Herodium, that a very jolly and extensive way of life was practiced in his palaces by the dozens and hundreds (in particular at Herodium) guests of the king or his family members.

### **Samaria-Sebaste (K&W, 194-196)**

Samaria-Sebaste was built, according to Kasher & Witztum, as part of a large strategic scheme, to divide between the Jewish population in Judea and in the Galilee, a scheme in which Caesarea and hippo, as well, were meant to take part. In theory this might have been the reason. In any event, in Kasher & Witztum's book there is no mention of inferiority, or megalomania, behind the construction and the fortification of Samaria. The policy of separation between the two large Jewish communities is a strategic long term plan, and if this was really the case, it can only pointsto Herod's sophistication, in managing his kingdom.

### **Caesarea Maritima (K&W, 196-208; 272-276)**

«Herod apparently invested tremendous effort in the construction of both the city and the port so as to impress the world at large with their power of and magnificence; they were intended by him to serve as showcase for all who entered his kingdom, in particular for events of an international nature such as the Olympic games that were held there» (K&W, 197). Was this the real reason for all the extreme efforts invested here for 12 years? «From descriptions of the construction of both Caesarea and the port of Sebastos, it emerges that the greater portion of Herod's resources and energies were invested in the latter. He apparently took particular pride in it, as was evident during the visit of Marcus Agrippa in 15 B.C.E.» (K&W, 200). Herod had good reasons to be pride; in the background of building the port were some good reasons, such as the development of his kingdom's commerce and economy, and the maintenance of good connections with the countries along the Mediterranean, in particular Italy, all of that should not be the megalomania. Kasher & Witztum wrote themselves: «There is no doubting the economic benefit that the port of Caesarea brought to Herod's kingdom and the province of Syria owing to its major contribution to the development of the empire's trade in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean» (K&W, 201). And continue: «Of particular interest to us, however, is his arrogance in publicizing his wondrous achievements as a reflection of the success of Augustus' policy of *pax Romana* (the Roman Peace)...» (K&W, *ibid.*). May we raise the question: was the harbor here built by Augustus? In the continuation of their text the two

scholars state: «In Herod's view as an individual, this was a golden opportunity to display his greatness; at the same time, it offers us an excellent example of his megalomaniac streak» (K&W, *ibid.*).

Is this the real reason for the vast efforts invested here by the king along 12 years? Years during which no political murder is recorded? On the other hand, during this period of time the Temple was rebuilt and the Temple Mount dramatically enlarged; Herod was honored by the visit of Marcus Agrippa and a year later accompanied him in his trip to Asia Minor during which he could help a lot of the Jewish communities; his country, no doubt, continued to develop and flourished. In all of these years, was the main motivation of his activity at Caesarea inferiority feelings, paranoia and frustration? (The same should be said concerning the Temple and the Temple Mount that were constructed more or less at the same period of time).

True, the Pagan Temple at Caesarea (one and not two) was oriented towards those who entered the harbor on board of boats. Doing so the architects had to harm, in their own hands, the well planned grid they established here all over the new town. However, the comparison Josephus made between the two idols that were put in the Temple and those known from Temples in Olympia and Argos in Greece, does not cling to us, not from the artistic point of view and not from the comparison of their sizes. Why should have existed here the “competition” (as if between Athens and Olympia) which according to the two scholars is a proof to Herod's «...megalomaniac tendencies and his insistence that wherever he displayed be the loveliest and most impressive» (K&W, 201-202).

Also the festival organized by Herod at Caesarea, to celebrate its inauguration is interpreted by Kasher & Witztum, how not, as a result of megalomaniac tendencies. Did such a huge project, including the construction of a huge deep water harbor, not deserve a special note? The main function of this harbor, which after all was due to create links with all the relevant countries located on the shores of the Mediterranean, is well expressed by Josephus, as the two scholars themselves wrote: «As expected, the festivities held upon completion of the construction of Caesarea were exceptional in their splendor and scale, particularly since they were conducted in the presence of delegations of high-ranking representatives from assorted cities, countries and peoples of the eastern Mediterranean Basin. It seems that the hospitality extended to the delegations surpassed all the norms of such occasions. In fact Herod's celebrations were renowned throughout the highest circles of the Roman Empire, for which he earned the praises of the Emperor himself and of his well known assistant Marcus Agrippa» (K&W, 273). True, these celebrations were justified, in

light of the huge effort invested here and they, again justly, express Herod's success, at that point of his life, in managing the kingdom's external and internal affairs – nothing to do with paranoia.

### The Temple and the Temple Mount (K&W, 213-217; 225-243)

Before discussing the various considerations Herod might have had, in his mind, prior to the beginning of his great venture at the Temple Mount, we would like to draw special attention to the two following points:

1. Herod's capacity, determination and success, in convincing his Jewish tenants, in particular the priests, as to his good will and intentions to rebuild the Temple.
2. The second point is basically the result of the architectural analysis of the Temple and the Temple Mount we have done. The planning of the inner court, around the Temple (the *azarah*), including the gates, offices, colonnades, the high wall around and the *Heil* (which encircled it), according to Josephus and the Jewish sources, in particular the Mishnah – as well as the short period of time during which they were constructed (Herod was committed to accomplish the work in a year and a half, and apparently finished it even slightly earlier) – points towards an excellent cooperation and coordination between Herod's architects and the priests

If we consider these two points does they reflect megalomania, Paranoia, or rather the opposite – a rational, well calculated approach. The only project, to do with the Temple, which might rise up questions as to megalomania is the enlargement of the Temple Mount. Discussing this issue we better divide the question into two: the erection of the enormous *stoa basileia*, which stretched all along the southern edge of the mount, and the extensions towards west and north.

We have already discussed before Herod's special needs behind the construction of the *stoa basileia*; it seems to us that our, in this issue, was well accepted – Herod's basic need, not being himself a priest, to establish on the Temple Mount an honorable location for himself, beyond the holy precinct of 500x500 cubit, which was controlled by the priests. The constant danger of the kingdom ship taken from him and given to the hands of somebody else, apparently a Hasmonean, derived him to invest the enormous architectural and engineering efforts in building the *stoa basileia*. It enabled to enjoy, within the Temple Mount an honorable place, which fits his proper status, and launching lavish receptions for his guests, not in particular all Jewish. At the same time Herod was sensitive enough not to erect an alien edifice; even though

we can not fully proof it, but following its architectural design and its relationship with the adjacent colonnades (on the west and the east) we believe that except the periods of the three main pilgrimage feasts and the high holidays, the *stoa basileia* was open to everyone. In order to enable royal receptions during these holydays, the huge basilica was most probably separated from the rest of the mount by means of wooden panels or curtains, which would enable the king to implement these receptions, in privacy.

Concerning the extensions of the Temple Mount towards west and north we should take into account the three following factors:

1. The total area of the Temple and the relevant courts (such as the women Court that probably did not existed before) grew up and therefore the area open to the sky have diminished.
2. The natural growth of the local population, and the growing standard of living, apparently increased the number of pilgrims to the Temple.
3. The enlargement of the Temple Mount might reflect a calculated policy in favor of the Diaspora Jews with whom, it seems, Herod maintained a special connection. Such policy is featured by the tendency to nominate high priests from the Diaspora, to settle Babylonian Jews in the Golanis, and the efforts Herod made towards the local Jews during his tour of Asia Minor to the side of Marcus Agrippa in 15 B.C.E.

True, this has been a huge project, if you wish name it “grandiose”, but after all the Jerusalemite Temple was the central and only shrine of the Jewish people, and the benefits Herod gained, in his internal affairs, was a sufficient reason to investigate the efforts he did here. (Even if some of the money has been covered by the priests). The archaeological impressive remains of the Temple Mount, in any event, are the best testimony to this unique project.

## A General Discussion

On the one hand, Kasher & Witztum pays attention to every detail in Josephus writings (and occasionally, when a certain section does not seems to the point, they interpret it as tendentious; however, on the other hand, although many of Herod's building projects are taken by them as a proof of his megalomania, the picture they present of these projects is incomplete and no effort is done to understand how and why, were they constructed. Data concerning the kingdom's everyday life and or-

ganization is meager in Josephus writings (the major source of Kasher & Witztum), in contrary to the abundance of gossip around the court. On the other hand, the architectural analysis of the various building projects enables us, although in a small scale, to look into the style of life of the royal family and those who were close to them.

We have to keep in mind that the buildings were not in particular built as monuments *per se* but were meant to serve various populations. The hippodrome in the Jewish garden city of Jericho was not built in order to stand empty. It was built to serve thousands of spectators, even though many of them resided in Jericho only seasonally. Caesarea's harbor was not meant only to serve Roman VIPs, in their rare visits, but first of all to enable a regular commercial route of goods and passengers, and perhaps even Jewish pilgrims on their way to the Temple in Jerusalem; after all, the major efforts invested by the builder king, in this field concentrated in the Temple Mount and Caesarea with its harbor.

## Megalomania

«In our view, this aspect of Herod's personality is evident primarily in his obsessive “addiction” to colossal building projects...» (K&W, 82). So much are Kasher & Witztum convinced in their thesis, that the word megalomania is repeated 15 times (if we counted well) in the 20 chapters of their book, what seems to me beyond any proportion, in particular when the whole issue of megalomania is in question. Does every huge building project is a result of someone's megalomania? Above we defined five tentative features of megalomania, in architecture and building. In fact, none of these features characterize Herod's buildings.

In Herod's motivations to erect his building projects we see a combination of a love of building *per se*; efforts to strength the kingdom; and a strong ambition – rather than the result of megalomaniac tendencies, originated in inferiority feelings and paranoia. One of the proofs to our claim is Herod's persistence. In a graphic table, representing Herod's building program according to the years of their construction, taking into account their relative size (see Netzer 2008, 303). If we divide Herod's reign into four periods, the following can be clearly seen (with some generalization):

- A. During the years 37 and 27 B.C.E., the main attention was given to the fortified palaces (first of all Antonia) and at the end of this period to Samaria-Sebaste.

- B. During the years 27 and 22 B.C.E., the two major palaces were constructed, the central palace at Jerusalem and Herodium.
- C. During the years 22 and 10 B.C.E., the main effort was given to the two most significant projects erected by the king, to the Temple Mount at Jerusalem and to Caesarea with its harbor. Towards the end of this period a few much smaller projects (in scale) were built: a royal theater at Herodium; the three *opus reticulatum* constructions (the third winter palace in Jericho, the family mausoleum in Jerusalem and a temple in Banias); and apparently also the hippodrome at Jericho.
- D. During the last years of Herod's life, 10-4 B.C.E., construction still went on: Antipatris; Antedon; Phasael (in the Jordan Valley); and apparently also his mausoleum at Herodium. Finally, at the latter site, the construction of the artificial conic-shaped hill together with the monumental stairway which led to the burial place and the fortified palace on the mountain's top.

Behind this well calculated division of the different projects, along the years, one can observe an organized way of thinking, plenty of logic, and a long range planning, which does not represent, in any mean, inferiority feelings, competition with, or hate of the Hasmoneans. We face a man who gradually, but surely developed and strengthen his kingdom. One can not designate here «shooting from the hip», which could point to paranoia or megalomania.

The possibility that Herod look forward also to rule over Egypt and Syria, as a result of his megalomania, seems to us absurd from its bottom. «... this is also the proper interpretation of Augustus' willingness to accede to Herod's request and grant his younger brother Pheroras the territory of Peraea. In a state of Megalomanic elation, Herod also hoped to see the rumor that the Emperor and Marcus Agrippa favored appointing him over all of Syria and Egypt borne out as well. If indeed there were any truth to the rumor (assuming that he himself spread it), this would be further indication of his grandiose aspirations; and it were merely a flight of fancy on his part, it would demonstrate the gap between his low self esteem (i.e., his sense of inferiority) and his enormous, insatiable ambition» (K&W, 207).

Is it really so? Does one have totally not to trust the common sense of a man that ruled for 33 years over his kingdom with a lot of talent, both the internal and external affairs, albeit all the difficulties he faced (including his personal internal drives causing death some of his family members who were so close to him)?

To end we would like to quote what we said in 1980, summing up a symposium which took place in Yad Yitzchak Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem: «If it is possible to

learn about Herod from his projects, then he was a practical and thorough man, with a broad world view, outstanding organizational talent and improvisational ability (in the best sense of the term), able to adapt himself to his surroundings and to changing situations – a man who anticipated the future and had his two feet planted firmly on the ground» (Netzer 2008, 306).