



One of the mosaic floors in the Western Palace at Masada.

refugees that sought shelter on the rock cliff did not come to enjoy the facilities that provided such a pleasant life for its earlier residents; moreover, they did not come for a brief sojourn. The elaborate and luxurious structures which they found on the cliff were adapted for their own needs without consideration for their aesthetic ambiance. On the colorful mosaics of the Western Palace they built unadorned pools for washing their feet before entering the ritual baths. A similar pool, built at the site of the large bathhouse, concealed the wall paintings of the entrance room to the bathhouse. It seems that occasionally this disregard and damage to the architectural ornamentations at Masada was deliberate, designed to convey a clear message that the refugees fled there in order to fight against the Roman Empire and not to take pleasure in the luxurious facilities built by Herod.

One result of the extensive excavations carried out by Yigael Yadin from 1963 to 1965 is that the visitor encounters remains from all three chronological periods. In the description presented below, we will try to distinguish between the sleepy Masada guarded by a small military contingent of about 20 soldiers, the Masada in which hundreds of people were engaged in daily activities when Herod resided on the rock cliff, and the Masada of the rebels who sought refuge from the Roman army.



A Brief History of Masada

1. The Hasmonean Period

Joseph ben Mattathias (henceforth, Josephus Flavius), author of *The Jewish War*, pointed out in his book that it was the high priest Jonathan who built Masada. In his writings, the name Jonathan the Hasmonean refers to Jonathan ben (son of) Mattathias, the brother of Judah Maccabee who served as high priest between 152 and 143 BCE. However, from the coins of Alexander Jannaeus, king of Judea from 103 to 76 BCE, we know that the Hebrew name of the grandson of Simon the Hasmonean was also Jonathan. Alexander Jannaeus minted coins on one side of which was writ-

Aerial view of Masada, looking south. In foreground is the northern complex showing the three-tiered Northern Palace and, on the summit, the large bathhouse and storerooms.