

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

Asia

Bangladesh

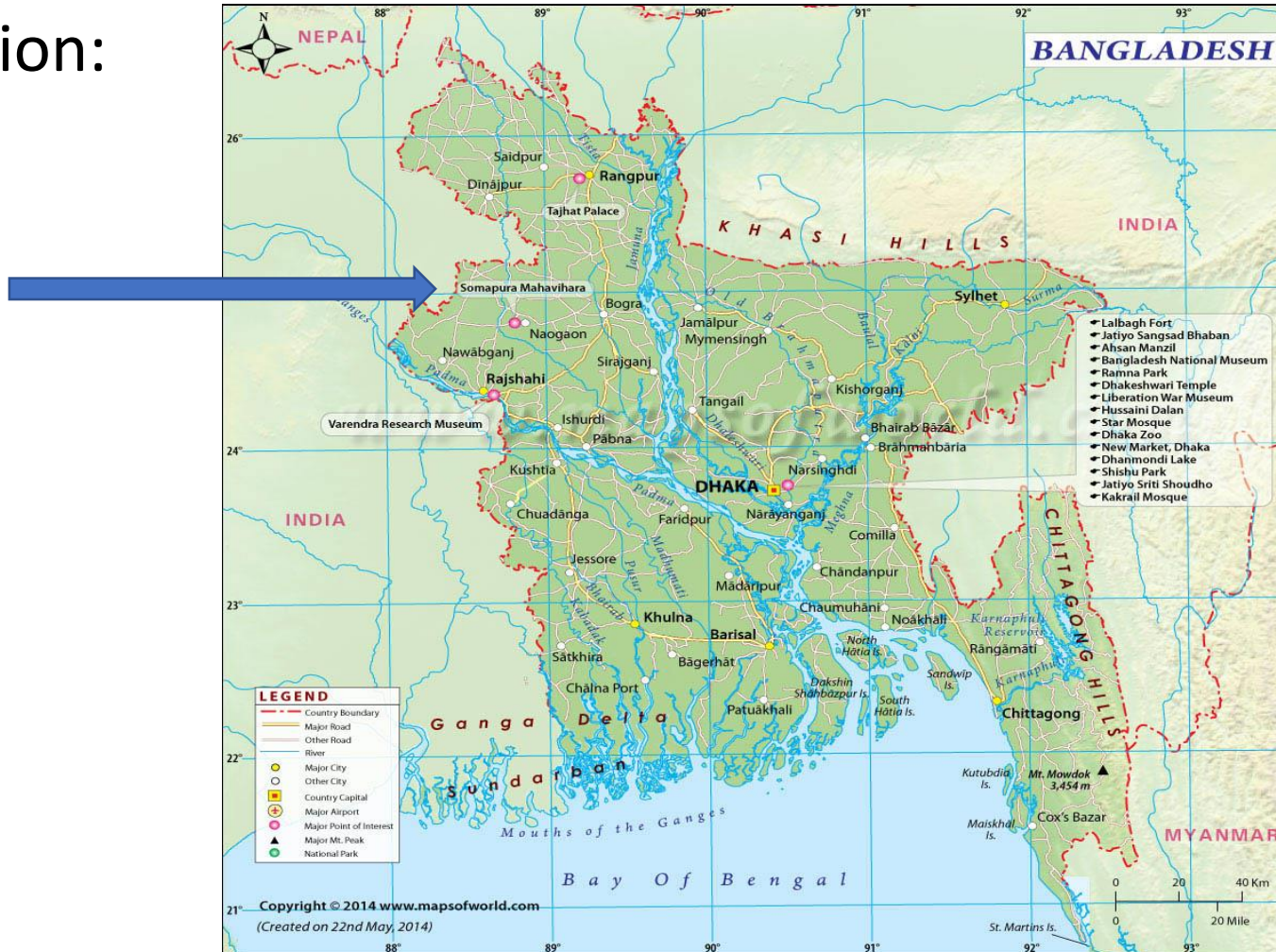
The Mahavihara (great monastery), at Somapura, Naogaon, Bangladesh.

- The “Great Monastery of Buddhism”.



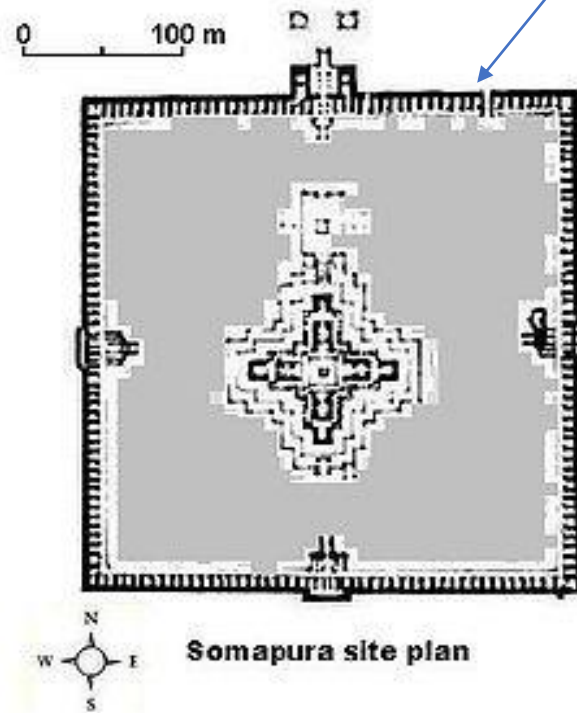
Paharpur vihara is near Naogaon, Bangladesh

- Location:



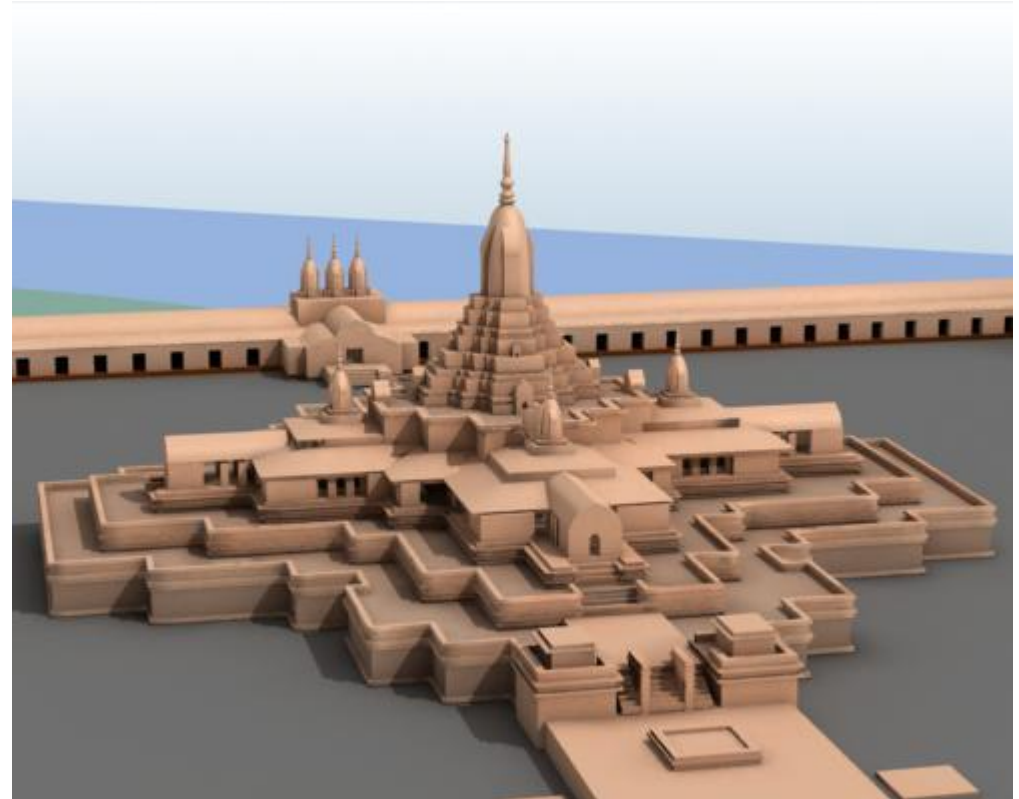
Plan of the site.

- There are 177 monk cells around the perimeter.



A suggested structure.

- The purpose of this structure at the centre of the courtyard remains unsolved at present.
- Hence, most of the debates generated hitherto on the architecture of Somapur Mahavihara are centred on the shape of its missing superstructure.



Buddhist monastery origins.

- The monastery was commissioned, in the eighth century CE, by Dharmapala, ruler of the Buddhist Pala family.
- Frieze around the base of the central structure.



Overpowered by an Hindu family.

- Approximately 300 years later the Hindu Sena family defeated the Pala family and the monastery declined in significance, being completely forgotten after the next hundred years.
- Sixty Hindu statues, like the one of Nandi shown, were re-discovered in the nineteenth century.
- They are housed in an adjacent museum.



China/Russia

Central Sikhote-Alin nature preserves in far eastern mountainous Russia.

- There are three nature preserves between Ussuri and Amur in the west, and the Sea of Japan and Strait of Tarary in the East.



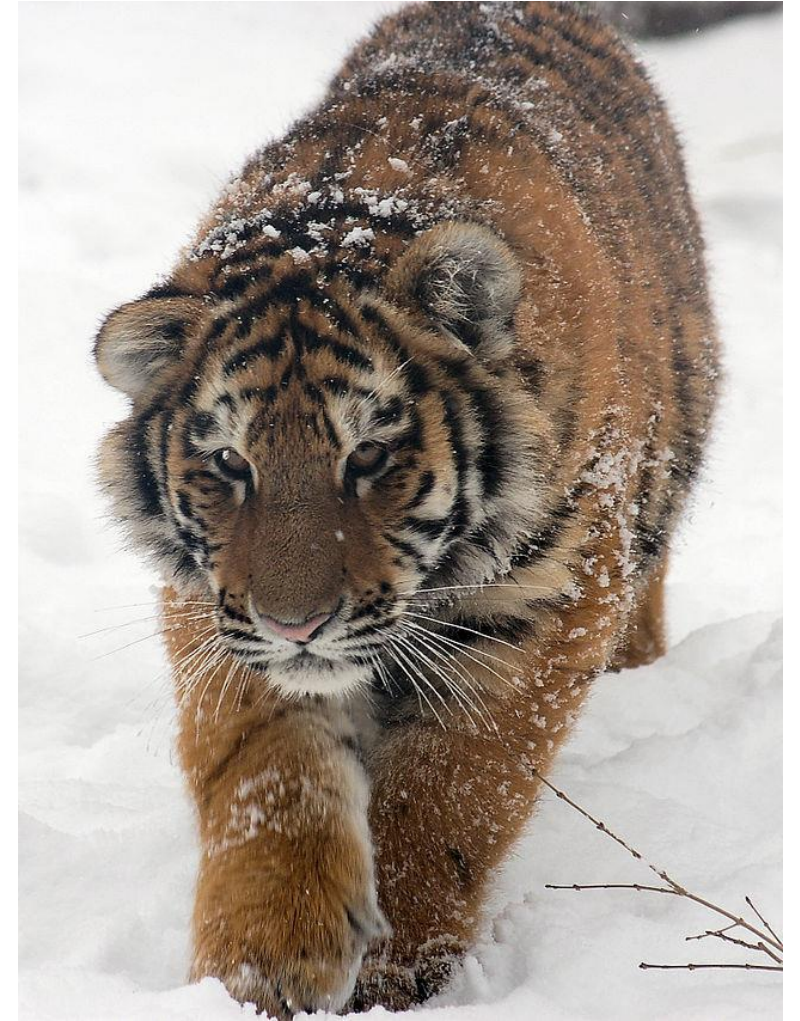
The Siberian tiger and Bengal tiger subspecies rank among the biggest living cats.

- The Siberian tiger also known as the Amur tiger, is a tiger subspecies inhabiting mainly the Sikhote Alin mountain region with a small population in southwest Primorye Province in the Russian Far East.



Threatened.

- In 2005, there were 331–393 adult and sub-adult Amur tigers in this region, with a breeding adult population of about 250.
- The population had been stable for more than a decade due to intensive conservation efforts, but partial surveys conducted after 2005 indicate that the Russian tiger population is declining.



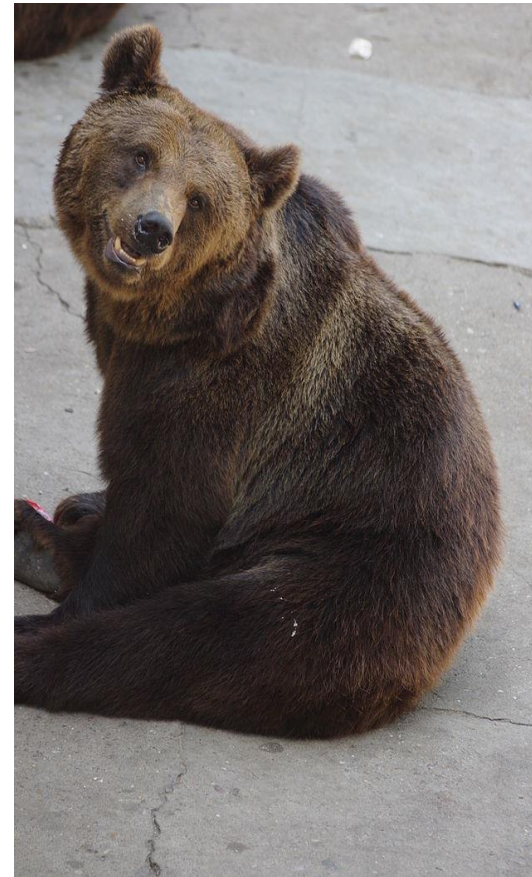
Critically Endangered Far Eastern Leopard.

- The Amur leopard is a leopard subspecies native to the Primorye region of south-eastern Russia and Jilin Province of northeast China, and is classified as Critically Endangered since 1996
- Only 14–20 adults and 5–6 cubs were counted in a census in 2007.
- Amur leopard with cub in the Minnesota Zoo.



Other animal species in the reserves.

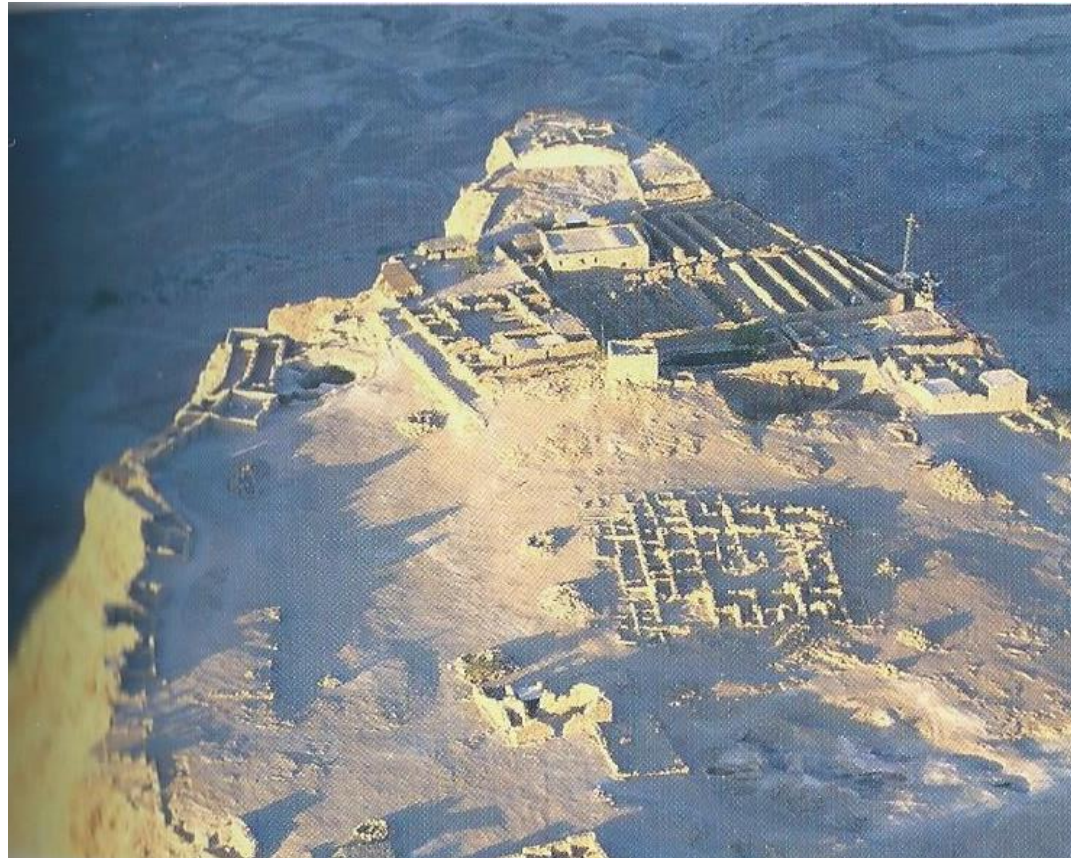
- Asiatic Black Bear and Ussuri brown bear.
- They are also found elsewhere.



Israel

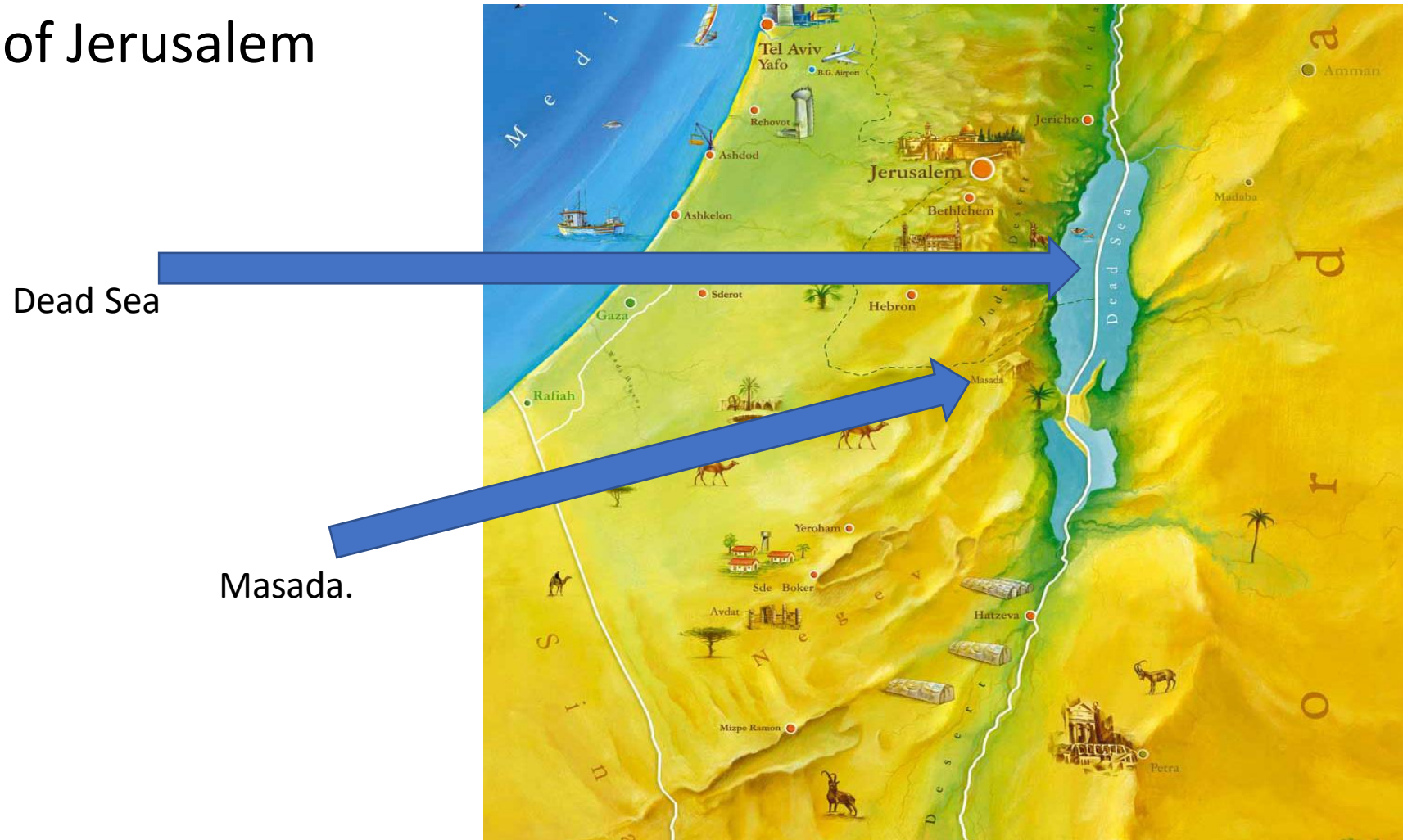
Masada.

- A symbol of Jewish resistance to oppression.



In Israel, overlooking the Dead Sea.

- South of Jerusalem



An Eyrie beside the sea.

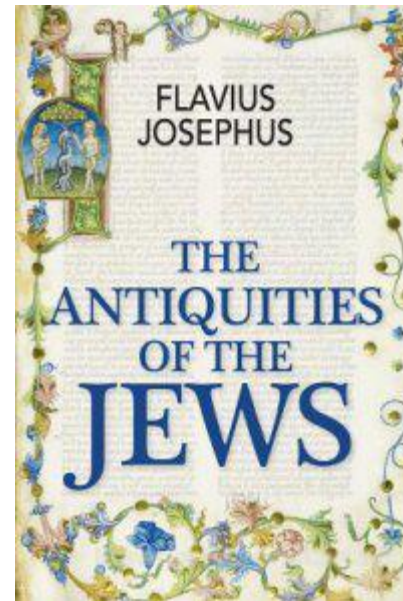
- Masada is located atop a wide, flat-topped, column of rock (i.e. a butte or plateau) at the western end of the Judean Desert.
- On the east side, the rock falls in a sheer drop of about 450 metres to the Dead Sea and on the western edge it stands about 100 metres above the surrounding terrain.
- The natural approaches to the cliff top are very difficult.



The only written source about Masada is Josephus Flavius' "The Jewish War".

- Titus Flavius Josephus, born Yosef ben Matityahu, was a first-century Romano-Jewish scholar and historian, who was born, 37CE, in Jerusalem, to a father of priestly descent and a mother who claimed royal ancestry from the formerly ruling Hasmonean dynasty.

- A 20 volume work by Josephus:



Josephus. 1

- He initially fought against the Romans during the First Jewish–Roman War as head of Jewish forces in Galilee in 66CE, until surrendering, in 67CE, to Vespasian after the six-week siege of Jotapata (Yodfat).



Josephus. 2

- Some historians state that Flavius Josephus fully defected to the Roman side and was granted Roman citizenship.
- Josephus claimed the Jewish Messianic prophecies that initiated the First Roman-Jewish War made reference to Vespasian becoming Emperor of Rome.

Jotapata (Yodfat):



Josephus. 3

- In response Vespasian decided to keep Josephus as a slave and interpreter.
- After Vespasian became Emperor in 69CE, he granted Josephus his freedom, at which time Josephus assumed the emperor's family name of Flavius

Vespasian:



A resort for Herod The Great.

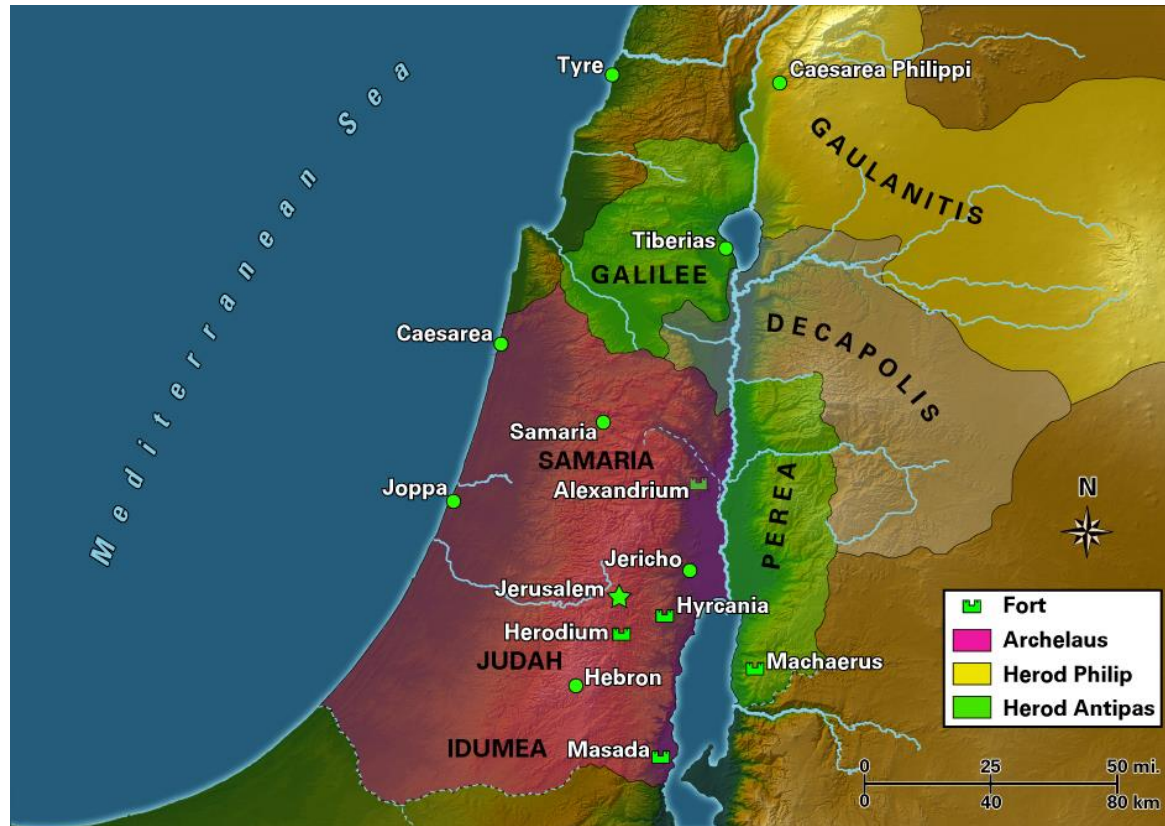
- Herod the Great built palaces for himself on the mountain and fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BCE.

- Remains of the Northern Palace.



The region around 830 BCE. Edom, (= Idumea), is shown in yellow on the map

- Herod, an Idumean, had been made King of Judea by his Roman overlords and “furnished this fortress as a refuge for himself.”



Casemate wall = double wall enclosing living quarters.

- It included a casemate wall around the plateau, storehouses, large cisterns ingeniously filled with rainwater, barracks, palaces and an armoury.
- A long casemate segment at Masada.
- Excavation has revealed that Jewish fighters and their families lived in the casemates during the Roman siege of 73 – 74CE.



Freedom fighters.

- Sicarii is a term applied, in the decades immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, to an extremist splinter group of the Jewish Zealots, who attempted to expel the Romans from Judea.

- Remains of the Masada Synagogue.



Armed and dangerous.

- The Sicarii carried sicae, or small daggers, concealed in their cloaks, hence their name. At public gatherings, they pulled out these daggers to attack Romans or Roman sympathizers, blending into the crowd after the deed to escape detection.
- Zealot and Sicarii are not identical.



Descriptions of events vary. The following is from an official Israeli Archaeology site.

- In 66 CE, a group of Jewish rebels(zealots, according to this site, Sicarii according to Wikipedia) overcame the Roman garrison of Masada.

- Mikve (ritual bath) on Masada.



Reinforcements.

- After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (70 CE) they were joined by more zealots(again, Sicarii according to Wikipedia) and their families who had fled from Jerusalem.
- There, they held out for three years, raiding and harassing the Romans.



Details of exactly where this camp is located are not clear .

- In 73 CE, Roman governor Flavius Silva marched against Masada with the Tenth Legion, auxiliary units and thousands of Jewish prisoners-of-war (totalling ten to fifteen thousand people). Siege camp F?



View from the west (showing the ramp built by the Romans?)

The Romans established eight camps at the base of Masada.

The troops prepared for a long siege; they established eight camps at the base of the Masada rock and surrounded it with a high wall, leaving no escape for rebels.

They then constructed a rampart of thousands of tons of stones, and beaten earth, against the western approaches.



Plausible reason for the Jewish prisoners in the besieging force.

- It is claimed by one source that the Jewish prisoners were used to build the ramp so that the defenders would not throw rocks down onto them.
- Thermal baths on Masada.



A calamitous ending.

- Once it became apparent that the Tenth Legion's battering rams and catapults would succeed in breaching Masada's walls, Elazar ben Yair - the Zealots' leader - decided that all the Jewish defenders should commit suicide; the alternative facing the fortress's defenders were hardly more attractive than death.



Eyewitnesses?

- Two women and five children survived the mass suicide by hiding in a cave; they came out to the Romans.
- Josephus describes all the dramatic details of the last hours of the Masada defenders as told by these survivors.

Cistern on Masada:



'Eye witness accounts' with all their (notorious) possible inaccuracies.

- There are significant discrepancies between archaeological findings, and Josephus' writings.
- Josephus mentions only one of the two palaces that have been excavated, refers only to one fire, while buildings show fire damage, and 960 people committed suicide, while the remains of only 28 bodies have been found.

Aerial view showing Masada and the Snake Path.

