

Sepphoris (Zippori)

Sepphoris sets 5 miles north of Nazareth, or about an hour's walk. It was the capital of western Galilee until Tiberias was in 19 AD. Sepphoris was under construction during Jesus' years in Nazareth. Herod Antipas began rebuilding the city in 3 BC. It is very possible that Joseph and Jesus worked on construction projects in this city as carpenters and stone masons.



In the winter of 39-38 Herod took Sepphoris in a snowstorm on his way to take Jerusalem. The city rebelled against Rome when Herod died and Rome destroyed it in 4 BC leaving it to Herod Antipas to rebuilt. Sepphoris took no part in the Jewish rebellion of 66-70 AD and so maintained good relations with Rome. When the Jews lost their temple, their holy city and freedom the Romans allowed them to move the Sanhedrin to Sepphoris. Here in Sepphoris synagogue life flourished and Sepphoris drew the greatest of the Jewish scholars. It was here in Sepphoris the Jewish scholar Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi (135-217 AD) wrote down the oral law and traditions of the Jews in a collection known as the Mishna in 220 AD (the written commentary explaining the Mishna is called the Talmud). Sepphoris was first excavated in 1931 by Waterman then by J. F. Strange in 1983. Near the theater at the summit is a large dining room floor from 200 AD that may have been home to the governor. There is a mosaic on the floor with 1 ½ million stones of 28 colors that includes a beautiful woman known as "Mona Lisa of Galilee." In another large building is a mosaic that portrays life in Egypt and includes Pharos, the lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Another interesting mosaic includes the zodiac with each of the zodiac signs labeled in Greek and Hebrew. This panel is placed beside other mosaic panels depicting Table of Shewbread, the consecration of Aaron, the ark of the covenant, etc



This Roman road in Sepphoris was one of the main streets. It was colonnaded



There are many well preserved floor mosaics in Sepphoris.