

Sepphoris was a major Roman city in the center of Lower Galilee, but its founding date is unknown. Its hill lies north-northwest about four miles as the crow flies from modern Nazareth. Josephus mentions that Ptolemy Lathyrus, ruler of Cyprus, besieged the walled city in 103 B.C.E. (*Antiquities* 13.338). Sepphoris became the seat of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, when the Romans entered in 63 B.C.E. Herod the Great captured the city in 40 B.C.E., during the first winter of his three-year war for the throne. His son Herod Antipas inherited the city at his death. Sepphoris revolted against Rome at the death of Herod and was destroyed by the Roman general Varus. Herod Antipas rebuilt Sepphoris as the “ornament of all Galilee” and made it his capital until the founding of Tiberias in 21 C.E. Sepphoris was excavated in 1931 by the University of Michigan under the direction of Leroy Waterman. Beginning in 1983 the University of South Florida has excavated Sepphoris under the direction of James F. Strange. Since 1985 the Hebrew University/Duke University Joint Expedition has also excavated at Sepphoris under the direction of Ehud Netzer, Eric Meyers and Carol Meyers.

In the foreground of this view are the remains of Roman/Byzantine structures unearthed by the Joint Expedition. Beneath the parasol is a stunning mosaic from a *triclinium*, or public dining room, that is undergoing cleaning and photography (see Slides 105-107). The building in the background, known locally as the Citadel, dates originally to the mid-fourth century C.E. and was used as a schoolhouse as recently as 1948.