



*Mosaic from a Roman villa in Sicily. Although the mosaic dates later than the Herodian period, the swimming apparel depicted here would not have changed dramatically.*

parently used for storing clothes and bathing gear, as was the custom at public bathhouses. These small alcoves were called “windows of *olearin*” by the Sages, that is, guardians of the clothes at the bathhouse, and they are mentioned twice in Tosefta and twice in the Babylonian Talmud.

Honorable guests invited to Masada probably did not climb by foot to the summit, but rather were carried in litters. Whether with reference to the people who reached the top from the west or to those who came up from the east via the Snake Path, the swimming pool was the most apt place to lift them out of the litters. Important visitors had tables of food and drink waiting for them alongside the pool, and the guests were invited to take a dip and cool themselves off. A pool of this sort was undoubtedly intended to astonish the guests and to confirm that Herod enjoyed the same comforts in Masada as in the other palaces, such as Caesarea Philippi (Banias) and Caesarea.

## The Western Palace

From the swimming pool, proceed a short distance to the north, then climb some steps to a flat, wooden area situated above the southern section of the Western Palace. As pointed out in the historical review above, the similarity between the Western Palace and the “twin palaces” exposed at Jericho has led to the adoption of the hypothesis that the Western Palace was built by Alexander Jannaeus and was used in the early Herodian period.

During the Second Temple period, the floors of ordinary rooms of the well-to-do were carpeted, but in rooms that were adjoined to water facilities, it was customary to have mosaic floors without carpets; some of the mosaic floors had designs that

*Plan of the Western Palace. Arrow indicates the way to the inner storeroom with the cooking facilities.*

