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## Ancient Jewish History

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## The Administration of Judaea

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## After the Exile

(538-332 BC)

### Cyrus

When Cyrus the Persian conquered Mesopotamia and the whole of the Middle East, he did so for religious reasons. Unlike any conqueror before him, Cyrus set out to conquer the entire world. Before Cyrus and the Persians, conquest was largely a strategic affair; you guaranteed your territorial safety by conquering potential enemies. But Cyrus wanted the whole world and he wanted it for religious reasons. Barely a century before, the Persians were a rag-tag group of tribes living north of Mesopotamia. They were Indo-European—they spoke a language from the Indo-European family, which includes Greek, German, and English. To the Mesopotamians, they were little better than animals and so went largely ignored. But in the middle of the seventh century BC, a prophet, Zarathustra, appeared among them and preached a new religion. This religion would become **Zoroastrianism** (in Greek, Zarathustra is called "Zoroaster"). The Zoroastrians believed that the universe was **dualistic**, that it was made up of two distinct parts. One was good and light and the other evil and dark. Cosmic history was simply the epic battle between these two divine forces; at the end of time, a climactic battle would decide once and for all which of the two would dominate the universe. Human beings, in everything they do, participated in this struggle; all the gods and all the religions were part of this epic, almost eternal battle.

Cyrus believed that the final battle was approaching, and that Persia would bring about the triumph of good. To this end, he sought to conquer all peoples and create the stage for the final triumph of good. He was the

greatest conqueror that had ever been seen; at his death, his empire was exponentially larger than any other empire that had ever existed. His son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt; the Persians, it seemed at the time, were on their way to world domination.

Although Zoroastrianism involved two gods—one good and one evil—all other gods were ranged on one side or the other of this equation. Cyrus believed Yahweh was one of the good gods, and he claimed that Yahweh visited him one night. In that vision, Yahweh commanded him to re-establish Yahweh worship in [Jerusalem](#) and to rebuild the [temple](#). Cyrus ordered the [temple](#) rebuilt. But what good is a temple without worshippers? To this end, he ordered that the Jews in Babylon return to [Jerusalem](#). In fact, Cyrus sent many people back to the native lands in order to worship the local gods there, so the situation with the Jews was not unique. Not all of the Jews went home; a large portion stayed in Babylon and some had converted to Babylonian religions.

## The Rebuilding of the Temple

The salient feature to keep in mind, however, is that Cyrus sent the Jews home for religious purposes only. Judah was re-established only so Yahweh could be worshipped, and the Jews were sent to Judah for the express purpose of worshipping Yahweh. Before the Exile, Judah and Israel were merely [kingdoms](#); now Judah was a *theological state*. The shining symbol of this new state dedicated to Yahweh was the temple of Solomon, which had been burned to the ground by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Under the direction of Zerubbabel and later Ezra, the [temple](#) is rebuilt and the walls of the city rebuilt by Nehemiah. The rebuilding of the [temple](#) was difficult; very few Jews actually returned home, so the effort was monumental.

During the [Exile](#), the Jews set about "purifying" their religion; they attempted to return their laws and cultic practices to their Mosaic originals. This new-found concern with cultic purity and the Mosaic laws, combined with the re-establishment of Judah as a theological state, produced a different society. Hebrew society was almost solely concerned with religious matters in the Persian period; foreign religions were not tolerated as they had been before. Non-Jews were persecuted, and foreign religious expelled. During the Persian period and later, Judah was the state where Yahweh and only Yahweh was worshipped. Both the Persians and the Greeks respected this exclusivity, but the [Romans](#) would greatly

offend the Jews when they introduced foreign gods.

The Jews had learned many things from the Persians and actively included Persian elements in their religion. It's important to note that this occurred side by side with the effort to purify the religion! Most of these elements were popular elements rather than official beliefs; they would persist only in Christianity which arose among the people rather than the educated and priestly classes. Among these were

a.) adoption of a dualistic universe. In early Hebrew belief, the universe was dominated only by Yahweh. All history was the result of two forces: Yahweh and human will. Perhaps in an effort to make sense of the [Exile](#), the Hebrews gradually adopted the Persian idea that the universe is composed of two diametrically opposed forces, one good, and the other evil. So, after the Babylonian exile, the Hebrews, in their popular religion, talk about an evil force opposed to Yahweh, which becomes the "devil" in Christianity. (Satan in the Hebrew story, *Job*, is actually a member of Yahweh's circle; he seems to be some kind of itinerant prosecuting attorney.)

b.) belief in a dualistic [afterlife](#). Before the Exile, the Hebrews believed that the soul after death went to a house of dust which they called "Sheol," to abide for a brief time before fading completely from existence. This belief was identical to all other Semitic versions of the afterlife. Therefore, Hebraism was primarily a *this-world* religion before the [Exile](#). The Persians, though, believed that the souls of the good would reunite with the principle of good in eternal bliss; the souls of the evil would reunite with the principle evil to suffer until the final defeat of evil. In popular religion, the Hebrews adopted this view of the afterlife. This view of the afterlife powerfully explains suffering in this life, such as the Exile; cosmic justice is apparent only at one's death rather than during one's life. Again, it is only in the popular Jewish religions, such as the [Essenes](#) and the Christians, where this view becomes orthodox.

For another two hundred years, Persia dominated all of the Middle East and Egypt, and came within a hair's breadth of conquering Greece. During

all this time Palestine was a tribute state of Persia. However, in the late fourth century BC, another man got the idea of conquering the world and set about doing it with ruthless efficiency. He was a Greek: Alexander of Macedon. When he conquered Persia in 332 BC, Palestine became a Greek state, and the children of Yavan would mix once again with the children of Shem.

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## The Age of the Patriarchs

### (~1950-1500 BC)

For the most part, the people surrounding the Hebrews took little interest in them for much of Hebrew history. The Hebrews themselves don't actually appear in history until the reign of Marniptah, king of Egypt from about 1224-1211 BC. The son of Raamses I (1290-1224 BC), generally taken to be the king of Egypt at the time of the Hebrew exodus, Marniptah undertakes a military campaign in Asia in 1220 BC. In an account of the campaign inscribed in granite, a list of all the conquered peoples includes the Israelites who are mentioned as "now living in Canaan."

Before this point, the only history of the Hebrews we have are written by the Hebrews themselves, in Genesis 12-50. In the Hebrew account of their own history, they trace their origins back to a single individual, [Abraham](#), who comes originally from Mesopotamia. The histories of the pre-Egyptian Hebrews is generally called **the age of the patriarchs** (patriarch means "father-ruler"); while it is virtually impossible to date this age since a.) the Hebrew history of the age is written down after more than a thousand years had passed and b.) no-one else was interested in the history, scholars place this age roughly between 1950 and 1500 BC.

Several aspects emerge from this history. First, the history of the patriarchs indicates that the special election of the Hebrews, made manifest in the delivery from Egypt, begins before the Egyptian sojourn and delivery. In Hebrew history, [Abraham](#) and his descendants are selected by Yahweh to be his chosen people over all other peoples. [Abraham](#), who is a Semite living in Haran, a city in northern Mesopotamia, and whose father, Terah, comes from the city Ur in southern Mesopotamia, is visited suddenly by

Yahweh and told to move his family. If [Abraham's](#) migration can be dated to around 1950 BC, this means that his migration from Mesopotamia would make sense, since the region was collapsing into chaos. Migrating to the west, [Abraham](#) stops at Shechem and is again visited by Yahweh, who then tells him that all this land will be given to him and his descendants. So the election of the Hebrews involves a certain unexplained quality (why pick [Abraham](#)) that is partially answered by [Abraham's](#) unswerving obedience when Yahweh asks him to sacrifice his son. But more importantly, the foundation of the Hebrew view of history is contained in these patriarchal stories. **[God](#) ("Elohim" in Hebrew) has a special purpose in history and has chosen the Hebrews and the Hebrews alone to fulfill this purpose.** In order to fulfill this purpose, God has entered into a covenantal relationship with the Hebrews and promises to protect them as a lord protects his servants. As servants, then, the principle duty that [Abraham](#) and his descendants owe to god is **obedience**.

The second aspect that emerges is that the early Hebrews are nomads, wandering tribal groups who are organized along classic tribal logic. Society is principally organized around kinship with a rigid kinship hierarchy. The relationship with god is also a kinship relationship: anybody outside the kinship structure (anybody who isn't a descendant of [Abraham](#)) *is not included in the special relationship with God*. At the top of the kinship hierarchy is a kind of tribal leader; we use the Greek word, "patriarch," which means "father-ruler." Well into the monarchical period and beyond, the Hebrews seem to dynamically remember their tribal character, for *Genesis* associates civilization with Cain and his descendants (meaning that civilization is not a good thing) and the history of the monarchy is clearly written from an anti-monarchical stance, since it is made clear that desiring a king is disobedience to God.

The third aspect that emerges is that these tribal groups of early Hebrews wandered far and wide, that is, that they did not occupy the lands around Palestine; this occupation would come considerably later. They seem to freely move from Palestine, across the deserts, and as far as Egypt. At several points in the narrative, Hebrew tribes move to Egypt in order to find a better life. It would not be unfair to imagine that the Hebrews were among the infinite variety of foreigners who overwhelmed Egypt at the end of the Middle Kingdom.

Beyond this it is difficult to come to certain conclusions. As far as the religion of the early Hebrews are concerned, it is generally believed that it had nothing to do with the Yahweh cult which is introduced by [Moses](#), for



*Exodus* asserts that [Moses](#) is the first to hear the name of god, Yahweh. The Hebrew accounts of the patriarchs generally use the term "Elohim" (God), "El Shaddai" (God Almighty), and other variants. Several religious practices described in *Genesis* seem to indicate a belief in animistic forces and even, possibly, polytheism, but these passages are highly controversial.

All we know for certain is that by the end of the patriarchal age, several tribes identified with one another as having a common ancestor and a common identity. We don't even know what they called themselves; we haven't successfully figured out where the term "Hebrew" comes from, although the best guess is that it comes from the Egyptian word, "apiru," or "foreigner." Several members of these tribes, whatever they called themselves, at some point migrated to Egypt, and Egypt would be the crucible in which would form the people and nation of Israel.

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## Ancient Gaza

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Gaza was an ancient gateway to Palestine on the road to [Egypt](#). Gaza was one of five [Philistine](#) cities along the southern coast that successfully resisted Israelite conquest until [Judah Maccabee's](#) brother Jonathan captured it [ca 150 [BCE](#)]. It was virtually destroyed by Alexander Jannai for revolting [ca 96 BCE]. But it was rebuilt as a [Roman](#) city by Gabinius. In [Acts](#) [8:26] it is the setting for Philip's conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch. But it was more than 300 years before it became a center for Christians.

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Source: [Into His Own](#)

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## The Lost Ark of the Covenant



**By David Shyovitz**

[Building the Ark](#)

[The Role of the Ark](#)

[History of the Ark](#)

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[The Role of the Ark Today](#)

[Judaism](#), as a general rule, rejects physical manifestations of spirituality, preferring instead to focus on actions and beliefs. Indeed, the story of Judaism begins with [Abraham](#), the original iconoclast, who, according to ancient sources, shattered the idols that were the conventional method of religious observance at the time. Worship of graven images is harshly

condemned throughout the [Torah](#), and perhaps the greatest sin the Israelites collectively committed was the construction of the Golden Calf (in [Ex. 32](#)), intended to serve as a physical intermediary between them and [God](#). Today, Jews do not venerate any holy relics or man-made symbols.

But early in the history of the Jewish people, there was one exception to this rule, one man-made object that was considered intrinsically holy. The Ark of the Covenant, constructed during the Israelites' wanderings in the desert and used until the destruction of the [First Temple](#), was the most important symbol of the Jewish faith, and served as the only physical manifestation of [God](#) on earth. The legends associated with this object, and the harsh penalties ascribed for anyone who misuses it, confirm the Ark's centrality to the Jewish faith of that period; the fact that Jews and non-Jews alike continue to study and imitate it confirms its centrality even today.

## Building the Ark

The construction of the Ark is commanded by [God](#) to [Moses](#) while the Jews were still camped at Sinai ([Ex. 25](#):10-22; [37](#):1-9). The Ark was a box with the dimensions of two-and-a-half cubits in length, by one-and-a-half cubits in heights, by one-and-a-half cubits in width (a cubit is about 18 inches). It was constructed of acacia wood, and was plated with pure gold, inside and out. On the bottom of the box, four gold rings were attached, through which two poles, also made of acacia and coated in gold, were put. The family of Kehath, of the tribe of Levi, would carry the ark on their shoulders using these poles.

**One artist's rendition of what the Ark looked like.**



Covering the box was the *kapporet*, a pure gold covering that was two-and-a-half by one-and-a-half cubits. Attached to the *kapporet* were two sculpted Cherubs, also made of pure gold. The two Cherubs faced one another, and their wings, which wrapped around their bodies, touched between them.

The contents of the Ark has been debated through the centuries. The general consensus is that the first tablets containing the [Ten Commandments](#), which were broken by

[Moses](#), and the second tablets, which remained intact, were contained in

the Ark (*Bava Batra* 14b). According to one opinion in the [Talmud](#), both Tablets were together in the Ark; according to another, there were two Arks, and each contained one set of Tablets (*Berakhot* 8b).

The Ark was built by Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, who constructed the entire Tabernacle – the portable Temple used in the desert and during the conquest of the land of Israel. The Tabernacle was the resting place for the Ark, and also contained other vessels that were used in the physical worship of God. The Biblical commentators argue over why [God](#) commanded [Moses](#) to build a Tabernacle in the first place: According to Rashi ([Ex. 31:18](#)), God realized after the sin of the Golden Calf that the Israelites needed an outlet for physical worship, and commanded that they build the Tabernacle as a way of expressing their own need for physical representation of God. According to [Nachmanides](#) ([Ex. 25:1](#)), however, the Jews were commanded to build the Tabernacle even before the sin of the Golden Calf; rather than filling a human need, the Tabernacle was God's method of achieving continuous revelation in the Israelites' camp. These two opinions as to whether the Tabernacles, and the Temples that followed them, were an *a priori* necessity or a necessary evil demonstrate the controversial role of physical worship in [Judaism](#) as a whole.

## The Role of the Ark

The Ark was used in the desert and in Israel proper for a number of spiritual and pragmatic purposes. Practically, God used the Ark as an indicator of when he wanted the nation to travel, and when to stop. In the traveling formation in the desert, the Ark was carried 2000 cubits ahead of the nation (*Num. R. 2:9*). According to one [midrash](#), it would clear the path for the nation by burning snakes, scorpions, and thorns with two jets of flame that shot from its underside (*T. VaYakhel, 7*); another [midrash](#) says that rather than being carried by its bearers, the Ark in fact carried its bearers inches above the ground (*Sotah 35a*). When the Israelites went to war in the desert and during the conquering of Canaan, the Ark accompanied them; whether its presence was symbolic, to provide motivation for the Jews, or whether it actually aided them in fighting, is debated by commentators.

Spiritually, the Ark was the manifestation of God's physical presence on earth (the [shekhina](#)). When God spoke with [Moses](#) in the Tent of Meeting in the desert, he did so from between the two Cherubs ([Num. 7:89](#)). Once the Ark was moved into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, and later in



the [Temple](#), it was accessible only once a year, and then, only by one person. On [Yom Kippur](#), the High Priest (*[Kohen Gadol](#)*) could enter the Holy of Holies to ask forgiveness for himself and for all the nation of Israel ([Lev. 16:2](#)).

The relationship between the Ark and the [shekhina](#) is reinforced by the recurring motif of clouds. God's presence is frequently seen in the guise of a cloud in the Bible ([Ex. 24:16](#)), and the Ark is constantly accompanied by clouds: When God spoke from between the Cherubs, there was a glowing cloud visible there ([Ex. 40:35](#)); when the Jews traveled, they were led by the Ark and a pillar of clouds ([Num. 10:34](#)); at night, the pillar of clouds was replaced by a pillar of fire, another common descriptor of God's appearance ([Ex. 24:17](#)); and when the High Priest entered presence of the Ark on [Yom Kippur](#), he did so only under the cover of a cloud of incense, perhaps intended to mask the sight of the [shekhina](#) in all its glory ([Lev. 16:13](#)).

The holiness of the Ark also made it dangerous to those who came in contact with it. When Nadav and Avihu, the sons of [Aaron](#), brought a foreign flame to offer a sacrifice in the Tabernacle, they were devoured by a fire that emanated "from the Lord" ([Lev. 10:2](#)). During the saga of the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, numerous people, including some who merely looked at the Ark, were killed by its power. Similarly, the Priests who served in the Tabernacle and Temple were told that viewing the Ark at an improper time would result in immediate death ([Num. 4:20](#)).

## History of the Ark

The Ark accompanied the Jews throughout their time in the desert, traveling with them and accompanying them to their wars with Emor and Midian. When the Jews crossed into the land of Canaan, the waters of the Jordan River miraculously split and the Ark led them through ([Josh. 3](#)). Throughout their conquest of the land, the Jews were accompanied by the Ark. The most dramatic demonstration of its power comes when the Jews breached the walls of [Jericho](#) merely by circling them, blowing horns and carrying the Ark ([Josh. 6](#)).

After the conquest was completed, the Ark, and the entire Tabernacle, were set up in Shiloh ([Josh. 18](#)). There they remained until the battles of the Jews with the Philistines during the Priesthood of Eli. The Jews, after

suffering a defeat at the Philistines' hands, took the Ark from Shiloh to Even-Ezer in hopes of winning the next battle. But the Jews were routed, and the Ark was captured by the Philistines. Back in Shiloh, Eli, the High Priest, immediately died upon hearing the news ([I Sam. 4](#)).

The Philistines took the Ark back to [Ashdod](#), their capital city in the south of Canaan, where they placed it in the temple of their god Dagon. The next day, however, they found the idol fallen on its face. After replacing the statue, they found it the next day decapitated, with only its trunk remaining, and soon afterward, the entire city of [Ashdod](#) was struck with a plague. The Philistines moved the Ark to the city of Gath, and from there to Ekron, but whatever city the Ark was in, the inhabitants were struck with plague. After seven months, the Philistines decided to send the Ark back to the Israelites, and accompanied it with expensive gifts. The Ark was taken back to Beit Shemesh, and, according to midrash, the oxen pulling the Ark burst into song as soon as it was once again in Israel's possession (A.Z. 22b). The actual text of the story, however, tells a much grimmer tale: The men of Beit Shemesh were punished for staring disrespectfully at the Ark, and many were killed with a plague.

From Beit Shemesh, the Ark was transported to Kiryat Yearim, where it remained for twenty years. From there, [King David](#) transported it to [Jerusalem](#). En route, however, the oxen pulling it stumbled, and when Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark, he died immediately. As a result of this tragedy, [David](#) decided to leave the Ark at the home of Obed-edom the Gittite. Three months later, he moved it to [Jerusalem](#), the seat of his kingdom, where it remained until the construction of the [First Temple](#) by [David's](#) son [Solomon](#) ([I Sam. 5-6](#)). When the Ark was finally placed in the [Temple](#), the [midrash](#) reports that the golden tree decorations that adorned the walls blossomed with fruit that grew continuously until the Temple's destruction (*Yoma* 39b).

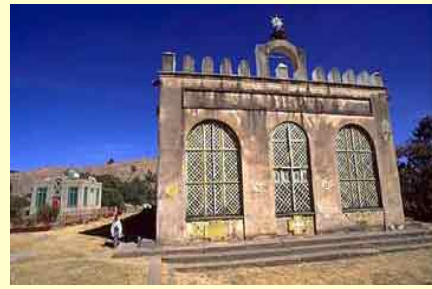
## The Ark's Whereabouts

The Ark remained in the [Temple](#) until its destruction at the hand of the [Babylonian](#) empire, led by Nebuchadnezzar. What happened to it afterward is unknown, and has been debated and pondered for centuries. It is unlikely that the [Babylonians](#) took it, as they did the other vessels of the

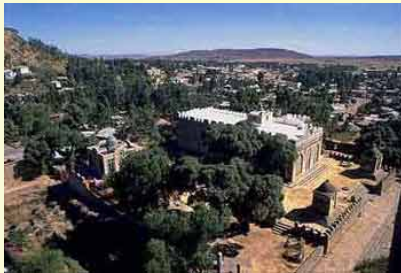
**The Church of St. Mary.  
The Treasury that is said  
to contain the Ark is in the  
background on the left.**



[Temple](#), because the detailed lists of what they took make no mention of the Ark. According to some sources, Josiah, one of the final kings to reign in the [First Temple](#) period, learned of the impending invasion of the Babylonians and hid the Ark. Where he hid it is also questionable – according to one midrash, he dug a hole under the wood storehouse on the [Temple Mount](#) and buried it there (*Yoma* 53b). Another account says that [Solomon](#) foresaw the eventual destruction of the Temple, and set aside a cave near the [Dead Sea](#), in which Josiah eventually hid the Ark ([Maimonides](#), *Laws of the Temple*, 4:1).



**Aerial view of the courtyard of the St. Mary Church in Axum, Ethiopia.**



One of the most fascinating possibilities is advanced by Ethiopian Christians who claim that they have the Ark today. In Axum, Ethiopia, it is widely believed that the Ark is currently being held in the Church of Saint Mary of Zion, guarded by a monk known as the "Keeper of the Ark," who claims to have it in his possession. According to the Axum Christian community, they acquired the Ark during the reign of [Solomon](#), when his son Menelik, whose mother was the Queen of Sheba, stole the Ark after a visit to [Jerusalem](#). While in the not-so-distant past the "Ark" has been brought out for Christian holidays, its keeper has not done so for several years due to the tumultuous political situation in the country. The claim has thus been impossible to verify, for no one but the monk is allowed into the tent.

A more plausible claim is that of archaeologist Leen Ritmeyer, who has conducted research on the [Temple Mount](#) and inside the [Dome of the Rock](#). He claims to have found the spot on the Mount where the Holy of Holies was located during the [First Temple](#) period. In the precise center of that spot is a section of bedrock cut out in dimensions that may match those of the Ark as reported in [Exodus](#). This section of the mount, incidentally, is the one from which the creation of the world began, according to [midrash](#) (*T. Kedoshim*, 10). Based on his findings, Ritmeyer has postulated that the Ark may be buried deep inside the [Temple Mount](#). However, it is unlikely that any excavation will ever be allowed on the Mount by the Muslim or Israeli authorities.

## The Role of the Ark Today

The Ark remains a topic of study even today, over 2000 years after it was last seen. A great deal of research has attempted to explain the wonders that are attributed to the Ark in the Bible. One recent study suggests the possibility that the Ark represented man's first harnessing of electricity. The accounts given of peoples' sudden deaths from touching the Ark are consistent with death by a high voltage, lethal electrical charge. Such a charge could have resulted from the constant exposure of the box to static electricity, which builds up quickly in a hot, dry climate like the Middle East. The materials that the Ark was made of further support this theory: gold is one of the most powerful electrical conductors, and wood is an excellent insulator.

The only remnant of the Ark in Jewish life today is the Holy Ark in which [Torah](#) scrolls are kept in [synagogues](#). These Arks often are decorated with copies of the Tablets, reminiscent of the contents of the actual Ark of ancient times. The Ark itself plays no role in Jewish life today. Nonetheless, it remains a potent symbol of the Jewish peoples' past, and of the [messianic era](#) many believe is waiting in the future.



Ironically, the Ark is most famous today as the subject of the 1981 film "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark." The movie tells of a hero's attempt to prevent the Ark from falling into the hands of the Nazis, who would harness its power for evil. While there is no evidence of [Hitler](#) ever having had an interest in the Ark, the movie does an admirable job of capturing the mystique of one of the worlds' most ancient unsolved mysteries.

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## The Babylonians

By Mitchell Bard

During Judah's first hundred years of independence, the kings enjoyed mixed success. At first they were able to, initially greatly expanding the country by conquering its neighbors, but ultimately they were being unable to prevent rebellions from reducing the kingdom to its original size. As in Israel, the [Assyrians](#) provoked a split within Judah between those favoring the appeasement of the enemy and those who wanted to fight. Like its northern neighbor, Judah tried to do a little of both and ultimately could not stop the superior forces of Assyria. The Assyrians besieged Judah in 701 B.C. and were on the verge of overwhelming [Jerusalem](#) when they mysteriously withdrew, and Judah retained its independence.

Before the Assyrians could attack again, they were conquered by a new power that burst on the scene, the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. While the former kingdom of Israel fell under the king's rule, Judah remained defiant. When an expeditionary force failed to quell the unrest, Nebuchadnezzar led his army into Jerusalem and captured the city in 597 B.C. He deported thousands of Jews who had been part of the ruling elite and who might be tempted to lead a future rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar appointed twenty-one year old Zedekiah, a descendant of [King David](#), to serve as king.

Zedekiah did not turn out to be the puppet Nebuchadnezzar expected and mounted a new revolt. This time Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the countryside and, after an eighteen-month siege, razed Jerusalem. In the typically grisly fashion of the time, Zedekiah's sons were murdered in front of him and then Zedekiah's his eyes were gouged out. A handful of

Judeans fled to Egypt, some poor, elderly, and sick peasants remained in Judah, and the rest of the population was [deported to Babylon](#). It was 586 B.C.; Judah had outlived Israel by 136 years, but the days of the Jewish kingdoms appeared to be over.

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Source: Bard, Mitchell G. [\*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Middle East Conflicts\*](#). NY: MacMillan, 1999.

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# The Babylonian Jewish Community

## From Second Temple Times to the Fifth Century

There was a group of Jews who never left [Babylonia](#) after the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century BCE. This community more or less thrived. Living since 129 BCE under Parthian rule, a loosely knit semi-feudal state, it was able to develop its autonomous institutions with little interference from the royal government. The Parthians who always feared [Roman](#) intervention welcomed Jewish opposition to Rome, at least until the time of Hadrian.

The Parthians established a Jewish liaison between the government and the Jewish community, the exilarch, who thus became the head of Babylonian Jewry. Descended allegedly from the [House of David](#), proud of their genealogical purity, the exilarchs wore the kamara, the sash of office of the Parthian court, and disputed precedence with high Parthian officials.

The community which they headed was both numerous (estimates of its number vary from 800,000 to 1,200,000) and well-based economically, comprising a fair number of farmers and many traders who grew rich as intermediaries in the profitable silk trade between China and the Roman Empire passing through Babylonia.

The Jews enjoyed not only freedom of worship, autonomous jurisdiction, but even the right to have their own markets and appoint market supervisors (agoranomoi).



In 226 CC the Sassanids conquered the Parthians. They were devout Zoroastrians, and there was some tension between the new political leadership and the Jewish community. However, after a period of troubles and disagreement at the beginning of the reign of Shapur I (241–272), better relations were gradually established with the king.

Apart from their political and economic status, the main interest of Babylonian Jewry was its relations with the rabbinic centers in Judea and its religious/political development, leading up to the creation of the [Babylonian Gemara](#). So long as there was a [Temple](#), Jerusalem was the religious center for the Jewish people. With the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, the relations of the Babylonian Diaspora with Israel were characterized by ambivalence.

There were attempts to make Babylonian rabbinic courts independent of Israel's as early as 100 CE. These attempts failed. The people and therefore the Babylonian Jewish leadership acknowledged the authority of the Israel Jewish courts.

During the Hadrianic persecution several scholars of standing, R. Yochanan Ha-Sandlar, R. Eleazar b. Shamua and other pupils of [R. Akiva](#) settled temporarily in Babylonia and thus enhanced its prestige. However, the masterful personality of the patriarch R. Judah I still dominated from [Israel](#). There were at least five Babylonians at his court, and he claimed and was accorded the right to ordain judges for Babylonia also. R. Judah did indeed admit the genealogical superiority of the exilarch, R. Huna, but only at a safe distance.

Conditions in Babylonia changed with the arrival in 219 CE at Nehardea of Abba Aricha (Rav), one of the pupils of [Judah HaNasi](#). He arrived at Nehardea with a copy of the new best-seller, the [Mishnah](#). Samuel, the son of Abba b. Abba, a rich silk merchant, was the leading sage at Nehardea. Samuel had established excellent relations with King Shapur I; it was due to him that the rule that civil law has the force of religious law became the guiding light for the Babylonian Jewish community.

Rav, noting serious differences between himself and Samuel, founded a new academy at Sura. Meanwhile, the school of Nehardea was dispersed after the Palmyrene raid of 259 CE and reassembled at Pumbedita, which became the rival of Sura among the Babylonian schools. More academies developed at Machoza and Mata Mehasya. The teaching process seems to be similar in all of the schools. Each started with a paragraph of

Mishnah to which there appear to already have been attached added traditions and discussions from the period prior to the writing of the Mishnah. These were discussed and new legal statements were added. Each of these developed chunks of material connected to a statement from the Mishnah is called a sugya. Each succeeding generation learned the sugya and then added questions, challenges (usually from another known sugya), philosophical arguments, and stories connected to either the actual materials being discussed or to an assumed principle which the legal students believed the previous generations of sages held. Since most teachers had been the students of the previous leader of the academies, many of their statements were assumed to be direct quotes of their teachers. There are also many examples of noting the behavior of a teacher as proof of that teacher's underlying principles. Some teachers believed in encouraging philosophical argumentation; others emphasized close examination of the legal texts themselves.

There continued to be a group of sages who traveled between Judea and Babylonia, exchanging traditions.

With the crises facing the Jewish community in the third and fourth centuries CE, the Babylonians, who were always proud of their descent, now began to insist also on their superiority in learning and in Jewish authority. During the reign of Constantine, the Nasi, [Hillel](#) II, made this easy for them. He made the rules of the calendar public, thus cutting the one remaining authoritative tie which Israel had over Babylonia. The outcome was that the legal academies in Babylonia from the 4th-6th centuries became the Jewish authoritative centers of the Jewish world.

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Source: [JewishGates.org](http://www.jewishgates.org)

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## Bet Din

By Jacqueline Shields

The [Hebrew](#) term applied to a Jewish religious or civil court of law. The bet din, literally translated as "house of judgement," originated during the period of the [Second Temple](#), and was known as the [Sanhedrin](#). This establishment of courts, however, has biblical origin, and is recorded in [Exodus](#). The text says that [Moses](#) sat as a magistrate among the people ([Exodus 18:13](#)), and he later delegated his judicial powers to appointed "chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens" ([Ex. 18:21](#); [Deuteronomy 1:15](#)), reserving himself for jurisdiction in only the most difficult, major disputes ([Ex. 18:22 and 26](#); [Deut. 1:17](#)). Judges were to be "able men, such as [those who] fear [God](#), men of truth, hating unjust gain" ([Ex. 18:21](#)) and "wise men, understanding and full of knowledge" ([Deut. 1:13](#)). They were charged to "hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger," not be "partial in judgment," but to "hear the small and the great alike; fear no man, for judgment is God's" ([Deut. 1:16-17](#)).

When the children of Israel settled in their land, the allocation of jurisdiction on a purely numerical basis ("thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens") was replaced by allocation on a local basis, and judges were appointed in every town within the various [tribes](#) ([Deuteronomy 16:18](#); [Sanhedrin](#) 16b). The jurisdiction of the various courts was as follows.

(1) Courts of three judges exercised jurisdiction in civil matters generally, including those which might involve the imposition of fines. They also

had jurisdiction in matters of [divorce](#). A court of three judges was required for the [conversion](#) of non-Jews, for the absolution from vows, for the circumvention of the law annulling debts in the Sabbatical year, for the non-release of slaves after six years ([Ex. 21:6](#)); for the enslavement of one who commits a theft and does not have the means to pay for the principal ([Ex. 22:2](#), [Genevah 3:11](#)), and also for the taking of any evidence, even in noncontroversial cases. Compulsory orders in matters of ritual would also require the concurrence of three judges in order to be valid ([Ketuvim 86a](#)), as would the imposition of any punishment for disobedience.

(2) Courts of 23 judges exercised jurisdiction in criminal matters including capital cases ([Sanhedrin 1:4](#)). They also exercised jurisdiction in quasi-criminal cases, in which the destruction of animals might be involved, for example such as in [Leviticus 20:15–16](#). Where a case was originally of a civil nature, such as slander, but might in due course give rise to criminal sanctions, such as slander of unchastity, it was brought before a court of 23 ([Sanhedrin 1:1](#)). If the slander was found to be groundless, the matter would be referred to a court of three for civil judgment ([Sanhedrin 5:3](#)).

(3) The court of 71 judges, known as the [Sanhedrin](#) at the time of the [Second Temple](#), had practically unlimited judicial, legislative, and administrative powers, and certain judicial and administrative functions were reserved to it alone. The [high priest](#), the head of a tribe, and the president of the Sanhedrin, could, if accused of a crime, only be tried by the court of 71. Certain crimes were also reserved to its jurisdiction, such as the uttering of false prophecy, rebellious teaching by an elder, "zaken mamre," and the subversion of a whole town or tribe ([Sanhedrin 1:5](#)). Certain death penalties had to be confirmed by the Sanhedrin before being carried out, such as against the rebellious son, the enticer of idolatry, and false witnesses.

4) Apart from the courts mentioned above, the Temple had a special court of priests charged with the supervision of the Temple ritual and with civil matters concerning the priests. Originally, the priests performed general judicial functions since they were known as the sole competent interpreters of God's judgment ([Ex. 28:15, 30](#), [Deut. 33:8–10](#)), but later they adjudicated matters together or alternately with the other judges ([Deut. 17:9; 19:17; 21:5](#)). Eventually, the judicial functions of the priests were reduced to their simply being allotted some seats in the Great Sanhedrin.

Judges received their authority from their immediate predecessors who "laid their hands" upon them, a process known as "semicha." The president of the Great Sanhedrin was the authority who conferred judicial powers on graduating judges in a formal procedure before a court of three. Judges were, however, also appointed by kings, a power which appears to have eventually devolved with the rule of [Babylonia](#).

The practice of *semicha* ceased in about the middle of the fourth century and today *battei din* (plural of bet din) exercise their judicial functions only as agents of an implied authority from the Ancients (Sanh. 5:8). This "agency" does not extend to capital cases, and even for cases involving fines, some consider today's judges unqualified to adjudicate.

One of the consequences of the cessation of semicha was the adoption in many [Western European](#) communities of a system of election of judges to the bet din. In [Spain](#), the judges were elected every year, along with all other officers of the community. In [Israel](#) today, the procedure for appointing rabbinical judges is similar to that for appointing secular judges (Dayyanim Act, 5715–1955), but while the qualifications of secular judges are laid down in the law, those of rabbinical judges are in each individual case attested to by the chief rabbis on the basis of examinations.

The sin of appointing an unqualified judge is said to be equal to erecting an idol beside the altar for [G-d](#) (Sanh. 7b). Qualifications for judges are outlined in the [Talmud](#) in Sanhedrin and by [Maimonides](#). Maimonides enumerates a judges qualities as follows: judges must be wise and sensible, learned in the law and full of knowledge, and also acquainted to some extent with other subjects such as medicine, arithmetic, astronomy and astrology. He believes a judge must not be too old, nor may he be a childless man. A judge must be pure in mind, pure from bodily defects, but also a man of stature and imposing appearance. Tractate Sanhedrin describes the seven fundamental qualities of a judge as wisdom, humility, fear of God, disdain of money, love of truth, love of people, and a good reputation. The text continues commenting, a judge must have a good eye, a humble soul, must be pleasant in company, and speak kindly to people; he must be very strict with himself and conquer lustful impulses, have a courageous heart to save the oppressed from the oppressor's hate, cruelty, and persecution, and eschew wrong and injustice (Sanh. 2:1–7). The text tries to avoid any possibility for bias by writing, "a judge who is a relative of one of the litigants, or has any other personal relationship toward him, loves him or hates him, must disqualify himself from sitting in

judgment. . ." (Sanh. 3:4–5).

The bet din belongs essentially to the period of the Second Temple, and its establishment is attributed to [the prophet Ezra](#). He decreed that a bet din, was to convene on Mondays and Thursdays and be established in all populated centers. After the destruction of the Temple, [Yochanan ben Zakkai](#) established his bet din in [Yavneh](#) as the cultural and political center of the Jews. The Yavneh bet din was responsible for regulating the [calendar](#), and became the religious and national center not only of Israel, but also of the [Diaspora](#) at the time. In addition to this central bet din, local battei din continued to function, particularly in the vicinity of the academies; the [Talmud](#) speaks of the courts of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, [Rabbi Akiva](#), and Rabbi Yose (Sanh. 32b).

Toward the middle of the third century, the bet din as it had been functioning, gradually lost its importance due to the rise of Jewish scholarship in Babylonia and the increased oppression of Jewry under [Roman](#) rule. In Babylonia, no bet din ever achieved preeminent authority.

After the fall of [Rome](#) and throughout the [diaspora](#), bet din's were again established, but on a lesser level than in Temple times. Throughout most of Jewish history, the community vehemently opposed its members' summoning each other before secular courts. Jews who had legal disputes with other Jews were expected to bring their opponents before a bet din composed of three [rabbis](#). Each side was entitled to choose one rabbi, and then the two rabbis would choose a third one. The bet din would hear the testimony and arguments of both sides with the litigants representing themselves. Both sides were then questioned by the rabbis who acted as judges and issued a ruling on the case.

A bet din is still used today voluntarily by Jews to settle disputes within the community, for [conversion](#), and the validation or nullification of [marriage](#) and [divorce](#) documents. In [Israel](#), an elaborate network of bet dins were established under the Supreme Rabbinical Court in [Jerusalem](#). The State of Israel has taken over this system, giving the bet din exclusive jurisdiction over the Jewish population in matters of personal status such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance; however, secular courts oversee all non-[halachic](#) legal issues.

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# The Bible On Jewish Links To The Holy Land

**By Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein**

The Jews' link with the land of Israel and their love for it date back almost four thousand years. It began when God told Abraham to leave his homeland, *Ur Kasdim*, and go "to a land that I will show thee." Abraham had such great faith and trust in God that he left his home and community. He was reassured by the divine promise, "I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Genesis 12:2-3).

Israel is known by a number of names, including Canaan, Eretz Yisrael, Zion, or simply as ha-aretz, meaning "the land," a sign of its belovedness and significance. It is the Holy Land, par excellence. God promised Abraham that he and his descendants would inherit the land of Israel as an eternal possession.

In the words of the Bible, "On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land...'" (Genesis 15:18). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb used in the Scriptures is *natati*, meaning "I have given" (past tense). This passage implies that God had already given the land to the Jews at some earlier time, though this is the first record of such a promise. Rabbinic commentators suggest, however, that God had set aside the land of Israel for His people already at the time of Creation.

In other words, the Jewish rights to the land were always part of the very fabric of Creation. They are eternal and unconditional. God promised Abraham, "I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land



of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." God also covenanted with Ishmael, regarded as the father of the Arab people. However, that promise was for nationhood, not land. But the land of Israel was not just a Divine promise. It was also the home of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their wives, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.

For the past 3,000 years there was always a Jewish presence in the Holy Land. Israel is at the core of Jewish identity and peoplehood; the land shapes the Jews' self image and character as a community covenanted with God. Indeed, to repudiate the link between the Jews and the land of Israel is to repudiate the Bible itself. To denigrate the centrality of Israel for God's people is to distort God's Word.

## **How Did The Jews Maintain Their Attachment To Zion (Israel) Throughout The Centuries Of Exile?**

To fulfill their vow never to forget the Holy Land during their exile, the Jews introduced the theme of Israel into virtually every aspect of daily life and routine. To this day, Jews everywhere face toward Israel when reciting their daily prayers. A prayer for return to Zion is part of the standard Jewish blessing over meals. The Passover Seder meal, as well as the High Holy Days services, are concluded with the fervent hope and promise of, "next year in Jerusalem!"

Indeed, the restoration of Israel and the ingathering of the exiles are at the heart of all Jewish prayers for redemption and for the coming of the Messiah. It is customary for the groom to break a glass at a Jewish wedding, reminding the celebrants of Jerusalem during the happiest moment of life. Jews commemorate the destruction of the First and Second Temples and the exile from Jerusalem with an annual day of fasting and mourning. Through these customs and rituals, Jews demonstrate their trust in God's faithfulness.

Jews believe that those who cast their lot with Israel, praying for the peace of Jerusalem and the welfare of its inhabitants, will be rewarded by God's abundant blessing and countenance.

Israel is more than just the lifeblood of the Jewish people. It is God's land, the place where Divine providence is especially manifest. "The eyes of the Lord... are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). It is a "Very, very good land" (Nu. 14:7);

"a blessed land" (Deut. 33:13); "the beauty of all lands" (Ezek 20:6).

The Jewish mystical tradition claims that the very air of Israel makes one wiser. The land will, it is said, stubbornly "refuse" to bear fruit unless the Jews, its natural caretakers and the inhabitants for whom it was created, dwell on and cultivate it. History bears out this notion. Modern Israel was a land of desert and swamp for centuries until waves of emigrating Jewish Zionists in the mid-nineteenth century began tilling its soil. Only then did the land blossom and give forth its produce: "For the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden..." (Isaiah 51:3).

God's promise to Abraham created an inexorable bond between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. The fulfillment of God's promises resulted in the miracle of a Jewish return to their land after nearly two millennia of dispersion. Never during the long intervening centuries did the Jews waver in their passionate yearning to return home to the land God had given them. Never did their love for Israel wane.

## **What Does The Existence Of The State Of Israel Mean For Jews Today?**

There is something ineffable about our feelings toward Israel—they can never be fully captured or articulated. For more than we grasp Israel, it grips us. Only the person who experiences this love and attachment can understand it. You see, Eretz Yisrael or Israel is not *just* the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants. It is not *only* the "holy land" at the very center and core of all Jewish beliefs and practices—it is so much more.

Israel, for the Jew today, is God comforting His people. "Comfort ye, My people." It is that miracle which gives us hope for our future after enduring such a long and dark past. As the prophets say, "For there is hope for thy future, and the children shall return to their borders."

After the Holocaust, we Jews gazed dumbfounded at what had occurred. Was it possible to go on believing in a God of love after losing 6 million individuals, one third of the Jewish people, almost 2 million of whom were children? Was it possible to go on believing in God's covenant with Israel and their election? Was it possible to go on believing? In God? In man? Indeed, was it possible to go on?



Like Ezekiel before us, we Jews stood amidst the ashes of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Treblinka and we looked down in the valley of Sheol we asked, "Can these dry dead bones again live?" Can we Jews possibly recover from this devastation? And behold, a miracle—God breathed life into those dry bones and they came together, sinew to sinew, bone to bone. They took on flesh and spirit. They arose and were reborn in Jerusalem. "For the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Zion."

What does Israel mean to the contemporary Jew? It means that God has not abandoned His people. It means that He is true to His Word! Israel's existence gives us our very will and determination to continue living... as Jews. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for the welfare of all its inhabitants. They shall prosper that love thee." (Psalm 122:6)

## **Do Jews Believe That The Birth Of The State Of Israel Is A Miracle?**

People view life and events in two different ways. Some see them as they are on the surface, i.e. the "natural" order of things. Others see them on a much deeper and more penetrating level. This is what the Psalmist meant when he said, "A fool will not comprehend this." What seems obvious and revealed to the person of faith is viewed entirely differently by the one without faith.

Certainly, there are those Jews who view the birth and continued existence of the State of Israel as an "amazing" occurrence, one that came about because of the courage, training and initiative of the Israeli army. And this is, of course, correct. But what this perspective fails to take into account are the words of Moses in Deuteronomy, reminding the victorious Israelis never to forget *who* gave them that courage, that power, that ability to win the battle.

Yes, the birth of Israel and its continued survival in the face of many attempts to destroy it is a miracle. Indeed, I would go farther—the very continued existence of the Jewish people after having endured centuries of persecution, bears witness to a God Who is involved in human history, Who is concerned about its direction, and Who cares deeply about the welfare of His children.

It is impossible for me to look at the unfolding events in Jewish history, particularly those in recent years, to see Jews coming from all four

corners of the earth to Israel—from the former Soviet Union, Yemen, America, black Jews from Ethiopia, and not see God's hand in these events. God is gathering His children back as He promised to do. He is settling them on their land as the prophets foretold. And He is redeeming the world as the Bible said He would.

The exciting part of all this is that the drama is still unfolding—God continues to be true to Israel and His Word. It is happening right in front of our eyes. It is so obvious and clear to see. Yes, yes, yes, Israel is a miracle. "From the Lord this has come about, it is wondrous in our eyes." And yet, the fool who does not look deeper, below life's surface, will never comprehend these truths.

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Source: [International Fellowship of Christians and Jews](#).

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## Biblical Times

### The Patriarchs

Jewish history began about 4,000 years ago (c. 17th century [B.C.E.](#)) with the patriarchs-Abraham, his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. Documents unearthed in Mesopotamia, dating back to 2000-1500 B.C.E., corroborate aspects of their nomadic way of life as described in the Bible. The Book of Genesis relates how [Abraham](#) was summoned from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan to bring about the formation of a people with belief in the One God. When a famine spread through Canaan, [Jacob](#) (Israel), his twelve sons and their families settled in Egypt, where their descendants were reduced to slavery and pressed into forced labor.

### Exodus and Settlement

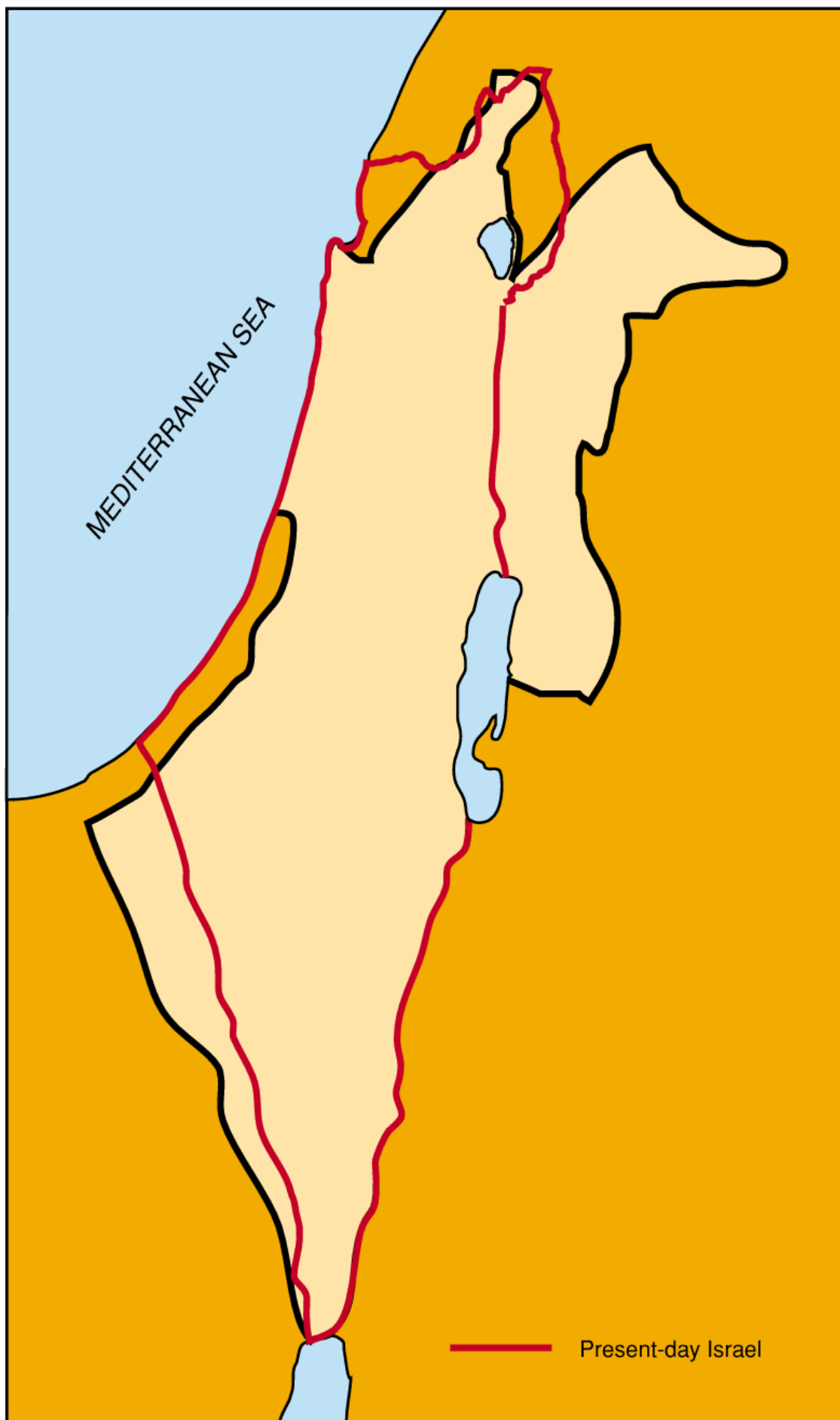
After 400 years of bondage, the Israelites were led to freedom by Moses who, according to the biblical narrative, was chosen by God to take his people out of Egypt and back to the Land of Israel promised to their forefathers (c. 13th-12th centuries B.C.E.). They wandered for 40 years in the Sinai desert, where they were forged into a nation and received the [Torah](#) (Pentateuch), which included the [Ten Commandments](#) and gave form and content to their monotheistic faith. The exodus from Egypt (c.1300 B.C.E.) left an indelible imprint on the national memory of the Jewish people and became a universal symbol of liberty and freedom. Every year Jews celebrate [Pesach](#) (Passover), [Shavuot](#) (Pentecost) and [Succot](#) (Feast of Tabernacles), commemorating events of that time.

During the next two centuries, the Israelites conquered most of the Land of Israel and relinquished their nomadic ways to become farmers and craftsmen; a

degree of economic and social consolidation followed. Periods of relative peace alternated with times of war during which the people rallied behind leaders known as 'judges,' chosen for their political and military skills as well as for their leadership qualities. The weakness inherent in this tribal organization in face of a threat posed by the Philistines (sea-going people from Asia Minor who settled on the country's Mediterranean coast) generated the need for a ruler who would unite the tribes and make the position permanent, with succession carried on by inheritance.

## The Monarchy

The first king, Saul (c. 1020 B.C.E.), bridged the period between loose tribal organization and the setting up of a full monarchy under his successor, David. King David (c.1004-965 B.C.E.) established Israel as a major power in the region by successful military expeditions, including the final defeat of the Philistines, as well as by constructing a network of friendly alliances with nearby kingdoms. Consequently, his authority was recognized from the borders of Egypt and the Red Sea to the banks of the Euphrates. At home, he united the twelve Israelite tribes into one kingdom and placed his capital, Jerusalem, and the monarchy at the center of the country's national life. Biblical tradition describes David as a poet and musician, with verses ascribed to him appearing in the Book of Psalms.



Kingdom of David and Solomon,  
10th Century BCE



## Kingdom of David and Solomon, 10th Century BCE

David was succeeded by his son Solomon (c.965-930 B.C.E.) who further strengthened the kingdom. Through treaties with neighboring kings, reinforced by politically motivated marriages, Solomon ensured peace for his kingdom and made it equal among the great powers of the age. He expanded foreign trade and promoted domestic prosperity by developing major enterprises such as copper mining and metal smelting, while building new towns and fortifying old ones of strategic and economic importance. Crowning his achievements was the building of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), which became the center of the Jewish people's national and religious life. The Bible attributes to Solomon the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs.

### The Prophets

The [Prophets](#), religious sages and charismatic figures, who were perceived as endowed with a divine gift of revelation, preached during the period of the monarchy until a century after the destruction of [Jerusalem](#) (586 B.C.E.). Whether as advisers to kings on matters of religion, ethics and politics, or as their critics, under the primacy of the relationship between the individual and God, the prophets were guided by the need for justice and issued powerful commentaries on the morality of Jewish national life. Their revelatory experiences were recorded in books of inspired prose and poetry, many of which were incorporated into the Bible.

The enduring, universal appeal of the prophets derives from their call for a fundamental consideration of human values. Words such as those of Isaiah (1:17) -- "Be good, devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged, uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow" -- continue to nourish humanity's pursuit of social justice.

### Divided Monarchy

The end of Solomon's rule was marred by discontent on the part of the populace, which had to pay heavily for his ambitious schemes. At the same time, preferential treatment of his own tribe embittered the others, which resulted in growing antagonism between the monarchy and the tribal separatists. After Solomon's death (930 B.C.E.), open insurrection led to the breaking away of the ten northern [tribes](#) and division of the country into a northern kingdom, Israel, and a southern kingdom, Judah, on the territory of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.



The Divided Kingdom,  
10th - 6th Century BCE

## The Divided Kingdom, 10th - 6th Century BCE

The Kingdom of Israel, with its capital Samaria, lasted more than 200 years under 19 kings, while the Kingdom of Judah was ruled from Jerusalem for 350 years by an equal number of kings of the lineage of David. The expansion of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires brought first Israel and later Judah under foreign control. The Kingdom of Israel was crushed by the Assyrians (722 B.C. E.) and its people carried off into exile and oblivion. More than a hundred years later, Babylonia conquered the Kingdom of Judah, exiling most of its inhabitants as well as destroying [Jerusalem](#) and the [Temple](#) (586 B.C.E.).

### The First Exile

The Babylonian conquest brought an end to the First Jewish Commonwealth (First Temple period) but did not sever the Jewish people's connection to the Land of Israel. Sitting by the rivers of Babylon, the Jews pledged to remember their homeland: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour" (Psalms 137:5-6).

The exile to Babylonia, which followed the destruction of the First [Temple](#) (586 B.C.E.), marked the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. There, Judaism began to develop a religious framework and way of life outside the Land, ultimately ensuring the people's national survival and spiritual identity and imbuing it with sufficient vitality to safeguard its future as a nation.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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## The Dead Sea Scrolls

By Ayala Sussman and Ruth Peled

[Archaeological Investigations](#)[Dating of the Scrolls](#)[The Essenes](#)[The Qumran Library](#)

Ancient Hebrew scrolls accidentally discovered in 1947 by a [Bedouin](#) boy have kindled popular enthusiasm as well as serious scholarly interest over the past half century. The source of this excitement is what these [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) reveal about the history of the [Second Temple](#) period (520 B.C.E.-70 C.E.), particularly from the second century B.C.E. until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.-a time of crucial developments in the crystallization of the monotheistic religions.

The Judean Desert, a region reputedly barren, defied preconceptions and yielded an unprecedented treasure. The young Ta'amireh shepherd was certainly unaware of destiny when his innocent search for a stray goat led to the fateful discovery of Hebrew scrolls in a long-untouched cave. One discovery led to another, and eleven scroll-yielding caves and a habitation site eventually were uncovered. Since 1947 the site of these discoveries-the [Qumran](#) region (the desert plain and the adjoining mountainous ridge) and the Qumran site have been subjected to countless probes; not a stone has remained unturned in the desert, not an aperture unprobed. The Qumran settlement has been exhaustively excavated.

The first trove found by the Bedouins in the Judean Desert consisted of seven large scrolls from Cave I. The unusual circumstances of the find, on

the eve of Israel's war of independence, obstructed the initial negotiations for the purchase of all the scrolls. Shortly before the establishment of the state of Israel, Professor E. L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University clandestinely acquired three of the scrolls from a Christian Arab antiquities dealer in [Bethlehem](#). The remaining four scrolls reached the hands of Mar Athanasius Yeshua Samuel, Metropolitan of the Syrian Jacobite Monastery of St. Mark in [Jerusalem](#). In 194-9 he traveled to the United States with the scrolls, but five years went by before the prelate found a purchaser.

On June 1, 1954, Mar Samuel placed an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* offering "The Four Dead Sea Scrolls" for sale. The advertisement was brought to the attention of Yigael Yadin, Professor Sukenik's son, who had just retired as chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces and had reverted to his primary vocation, archeology. With the aid of intermediaries, the four scrolls were purchased from Mar Samuel for \$250,000. Thus, the scrolls that had eluded Yadin's father because of the war were now at his disposal. Part of the purchase price was contributed by D. S. Gottesman, a New York philanthropist. His heirs sponsored construction of the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem's Israel Museum, in which these unique manuscripts are exhibited to the public.

The seven scrolls from Cave I, now housed together in the [Shrine of the Book](#), are Isaiah A, Isaiah B, the Habakkuk Commentary, the Thanksgiving Scroll, the Community Rule (or the Manual of Discipline), the War Rule (or the War of Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness), and the Genesis Apocryphon, the last being in Aramaic. All the large scrolls have been published.

## Archaeological Investigations

*The Caves.* At least a year elapsed between the discovery of the scrolls in 1946 and the initiation of a systematic archeological investigation of the Qumran site. The northern Dead Sea area, the location of Qumran, became and remained part of Jordan until 1967. The search for scroll material rested in the hands of the Bedouins, who ravaged the Cave I site, no doubt losing precious material in the process.

Early in 1949 the cave site was finally identified by the archeological authorities of Jordan. G. Lankester Harding, director of the Jordanian Antiquities Department, undertook to excavate Cave I with Père Roland de Vaux, a French Dominican priest who headed the École Biblique in

Jerusalem. Exploration of the cave, which lay one kilometer north of Wadi Qumran, yielded at least seventy fragments, including bits of the original seven scrolls. This discovery established the provenance of the purchased scrolls. Also recovered were archeological artifacts that confirmed the scroll dates suggested by paleographic study.

The Bedouins continued to search for scrolls, as these scraps of leather proved to be a fine source of income. Because Cave I had been exhausted by archeological excavation, the fresh material that the Bedouins were offering proved that Cave I was not an isolated phenomenon in the desert and that other caves with manuscripts also existed.

The years between 1951 and 1956 were marked by accelerated activity in both the search for caves and the archeological excavation of sites related to the manuscripts. An eight-kilometer-long strip of cliffs was thoroughly investigated. Of the eleven caves that yielded manuscripts, five were discovered by the Bedouins and six by archeologists. Some of the caves were particularly rich in material. Cave 3 preserved two oxidized rolls of beaten copper (the Copper Scroll), containing a lengthy roster of real or imaginary hidden treasures—a tantalizing enigma to this day. Cave 4. was particularly rich in material: 15,000 fragments from at least six hundred composite texts were found there. The last manuscript cave discovered, Cave II, was located in 1956, providing extensive documents, including the Psalms Scroll, an Aramaic *targum* of Job, and the Temple Scroll, the longest (about twenty-nine feet) of the Qumran manuscripts. The Temple Scroll was acquired by Yigael Yadin in 1967 and is now housed alongside the first seven scrolls in the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. All the remaining manuscripts, sizable texts as well as minute fragments, are stored in the Rockefeller Museum building in Jerusalem, the premises of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

*Khirbet Qumran (The Qumran Ruin)*. Père de Vaux gradually realized the need to identify a habitation site close to the caves. Excavating such a site could provide clues that would help identify the people who deposited the scrolls.

The ruins of Qumran lie on a barren terrace between the limestone cliffs of the Judean Desert and the maritime bed along the Dead Sea. The excavations uncovered a complex of structures, 262 by 328 feet (80 by 100 meters), preserved to a considerable height. The structures were neither military nor private but rather communal in character.

Nearby were remains of burials. Pottery uncovered was identical with that of Cave I and confirmed the link with the nearby caves. Following the initial excavations, de Vaux suggested that this site was the wilderness retreat established by the Essene sect, which was alluded to by ancient historians. The sectarians inhabited neighboring locations, most likely caves, tents, and solid structures, but depended on the center for communal facilities such as stores of food and water. Excavations conducted in 1956 and 1958 at the neighboring site of 'En Feshkha proved it to be the agricultural adjunct of Qumran.

The final report on the Qumran settlement excavations is pending, but the results are known through preliminary publications.

## Dating of the Scrolls

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls caused heated controversy in scholarly circles over their date and the identity of the community they represented.

Professor Sukenik, after initially defining the time span of the scrolls as the [Second Temple](#) period, recognized their special significance and advocated the now widely accepted theory that they were remnants of the library of the [Essenes](#). At the time, however, he was vociferously opposed by a number of scholars who doubted the antiquity as well as the authenticity of the texts. Lingering in the memory of learned circles was the notorious Shapira affair of 1883. M. Shapira, a Jerusalem antiquities dealer, announced the discovery of an ancient text of Deuteronomy. His texts, allegedly inscribed on fifteen leather strips, caused a huge stir in Europe and were even exhibited at the British Museum. Shortly thereafter, the leading European scholars of the day denounced the writings as rank forgeries.

Today scholarly opinion regarding the time span and background of the Dead Sea Scrolls is anchored in historical, paleographic, and linguistic evidence, corroborated firmly by carbon 14-datings. Some manuscripts were written and copied in the third century B.C.E., but the bulk of the material, particularly the texts that reflect on a sectarian community, are originals or copies from the first century B.C.E.; a number of texts date from as late as the years preceding the destruction of the site in 68 C.E. at the hands of the Roman legions.

## The Essenes

The [Qumran](#) sect's origins are postulated by some scholars to be in the communities of the *Hasidim*, the pious anti-Hellenistic circles formed in the early days of the [Maccabees](#). The *Hasidim* may have been the precursors of the Essenes, who were concerned about growing [Hellenization](#) and strove to abide by the [Torah](#).

Archeological and historical evidence indicates that Qumran was founded in the second half of the second century B.C.E., during the time of the Maccabean dynasty. A hiatus in the occupation of the site is linked to evidence of a huge earthquake. Qumran was abandoned about the time of the Roman incursion of 68 C.E., two years before the collapse of Jewish self-government in Judea and the destruction of the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#) in 70 C.E.

The chief sources of information for the history of this fateful time span are the Qumran scrolls and the excavations, but earlier information on the Essenes was provided by their contemporaries: [Josephus Flavius](#), Philo of Alexandria, and Pliny the Elder. Their accounts are continuously being borne out by the site excavations and study of the writings.

The historian [Josephus](#) relates the division of the Jews of the Second Temple period into three orders: the [Sadducees](#), the [Pharisees](#), and the Essenes. The Sadducees included mainly the priestly and aristocratic families; the Pharisees constituted the lay circles; and the Essenes were a separatist group, part of which formed an ascetic monastic community that retreated to the wilderness. The exact political and religious affinities of each of these groups, as well as their development and interrelationships, are still relatively obscure and are the source of widely disparate scholarly views.

The crisis that brought about the secession of the Essenes from mainstream [Judaism](#) is thought to have occurred when the Maccabean ruling princes Jonathan (160-142 B.C.E.) and Simeon (142-134 B.C.E.) usurped the office of high priest (which included secular duties), much to the consternation of conservative Jews; some of them could not tolerate the situation and denounced the new rulers. The persecution of the Essenes and their leader, the teacher of righteousness probably elicited the sect's apocalyptic visions. These included the overthrow of "the wicked priest" of [Jerusalem](#) and of the evil people and, in the dawn of the [Messianic Age](#), the recognition of their community as the true Israel. The



retreat of these Jews into the desert would enable them "to separate themselves from the congregation of perverse men (IQ Serekh 5:2).

A significant feature of the Essene sect is its calendar, which was based on a solar system Of 364 days, unlike the common Jewish calendar, which was lunar and consisted Of 354-days. It is not clear how the sectarian calendar was reconciled, as was the normative Jewish calendar, with the astronomical time system.

The sectarian calendar was always reckoned from a Wednesday, the day on which God created the luminaries. The year consisted of fifty-two weeks, divided into four seasons of thirteen weeks each, and the festivals consistently fell on the same days of the week. A similar solar system was long familiar from pseudepigraphic works. The sectarian calendar played a weighty, role in the schism of the community from the rest of Judaism, as the festivals and fast days of the sect were ordinary work days for the mainstream community and vice versa. The author of the Book of Jubilees accuses the followers of the lunar calendar of turning secular "days of impurity" into "festivals and holy days" (Jubilees 6:36-37).

The Essenes persisted in a separatist existence through two centuries, occupying themselves with study and a communal way of life that included worship, prayer, and work. It is clear, however, that large groups of adherents also lived in towns and villages outside the Qumran area.

The word *Essene* is never distinctly mentioned in the scrolls. How then can we attribute either the writings or the sites of the Judean Desert to the Essenes?

The argument in favor of this ascription is supported by the tripartite division of Judaism referred to in Qumran writings (for example, in the Nahum Commentary) into Ephraim, Menasseh, and Judah, corresponding to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. As the Essenes refer to themselves in the scrolls as Judah, it is quite clear whom they regarded themselves to be. Moreover, their religious concepts and beliefs as attested in the scrolls conform to those recorded by contemporary writers and stand in sharp contrast to those of the other known Jewish groups.

In most cases the principles of the Essene way of life and beliefs are described by contemporaneous writers in language similar to the self-descriptions found in the scrolls. Customs described in ancient sources as Essene-such as the probationary period for new members, the strict



hierarchy practiced in the organization of the sect, their frequent ablutions, and communal meals-are all echoed in the scrolls. From the Community Rule: "Communally they shall eat and communally they shall bless and communally they shall take counsel" (IQ Serekh 6:1). Finally, the location of the sect is assigned to the Dead Sea area by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder.

Although this evidence is accepted by the majority of scholars as conclusive in identifying the Essenes with the Qumran settlement and the manuscripts found in the surrounding caves, a number of scholars remain vehemently opposed. Some propose that the site was a military garrison or even a winter villa. The scrolls are viewed as an eclectic collection, neither necessarily inscribed in the Dead Sea area nor sectarian in nature, perhaps even remains of the library of the Temple in Jerusalem. Other scholars view the texts as the writings of forerunners or even followers of Jesus--Jewish Christians--who still observed Jewish law.

## The Qumran Library

The collection of writing recovered in the [Qumran](#) environs has restored to us a voluminous corpus of Jewish documents dating from the third century B.C.E. to 68 C.E., demonstrating the rich literary activity of Second Temple-period Jewry. The collection comprises documents of a varied nature, most of them of a distinct religious bent. The chief categories represented are biblical, apocryphal or pseudepigraphical, and sectarian writings. The study of this original library has demonstrated that the boundaries between these categories is far from clear-cut.

The biblical manuscripts include what are probably the earliest copies of these texts to have come down to us. Most of the books of the Bible are represented in the collection. Some books are extant in large number of copies; others are represented only fragmentarily on mere scraps of parchment. The biblical texts display considerable similarity to the standard Masoretic (received) text. This, however, is not always the rule, and many texts diverge from the Masoretic. For example, some of the texts of Samuel from Cave 4 follow the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Bible translated in the third to second centuries B.C.E. Indeed, Qumran has yielded copies of the Septuagint in Greek.

The biblical scrolls in general have provided many new readings that facilitate the reconstruction of the textual history of the Old Testament. It is also significant that several manuscripts of the Bible, including the

Leviticus Scroll are inscribed not in the Jewish script dominant at the time but rather in the ancient paleo-Hebrew script.

A considerable number of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts are preserved at Qumran, where original Hebrew and Aramaic versions of these Jewish compositions of the Second Temple period were first encountered. These writings, which are not included in the canonical Jewish scriptures, were preserved by different Christian churches and were transmitted in Greek, Ethiopic, Syriac, Armenian, and other translations.

Some of these are narrative texts closely related to biblical compositions, such as the Book of Jubilees and Enoch, whereas others are independent works—for example, Tobit and Ben Sira. Apparently some of these compositions were treated by the Qumran community as canonical and were studied by them.

The most original and unique group of writings from Qumran are the sectarian Ones, which were practically unknown until their discovery in 1947. An exception is the Damascus Document (or Damascus Covenant), which lacked a definite identification before the discoveries of the Dead Sea area. This widely varied literature reveals the beliefs and customs of a pietistic commune, probably centered at Qumran, and includes rules and ordinances, biblical commentaries, apocalyptic visions, and liturgical works, generally attributed to the last quarter of the second century B.C.E. and onward.

The "rules," the collections of rules and instructions reflecting the practices of the commune, are exemplified by the Damascus Document, the Community Rule, and Some Torah Precepts. Here we witness a considerable corpus of legal material (*Halakhah*) that has much in common with the rabbinic tradition preserved at a later date in the *Mishnah*. The *Halakhah* emerging from the sectarian writings seems to be corroborated by the sectarian *Halakhah* referred to in rabbinic sources.

The biblical commentaries (*pesharim*), such as the Habakkuk Commentary, the Nahum Commentary, and the Hosea Commentary, are attested solely at Qumran and grew out of the sect's eschatological presuppositions. The Scriptures were scanned by the sect for allusions to current and future events. These allusions could be understood only by the sectarians themselves, because only they possessed "eyes to see"—their distinct eschatological vision. Liturgical works figure prominently among

the sectarian manuscripts at Qumran because of the centrality of prayer in this period. The Thanksgiving Psalms (*Hodayot*) are of two types: those characterized by a personal tone, attributed by some to the "teacher of righteousness," and the communal type, referring to a group.

Many more compositions deserve mention, but this brief survey demonstrates the major role played by the Dead Sea Scrolls in improving our comprehension of this pivotal moment in Jewish history.

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Source: Ayala Sussman and Ruth Peled, [\*Scrolls From the Dead Sea\*](#), (DC: [Library of Congress](#), 1993).

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# The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery

by Simon Griver

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Back in 1947, a [Bedouin](#) shepherd boy stumbled upon one of the century's greatest finds in a dark cave in the Judean desert. He sold three of the seven scrolls to an antiquities dealer in [Bethlehem](#), who in turn sold them to the eminent archeologist Prof Eliezer Sukenik of the Hebrew University. The four remaining scrolls found their way to the U.S. and were purchased in 1954 by Prof Sukenik's son, Professor [Yigael Yadin](#), on behalf of the government of Israel. Over the years, thousands more fragments of parchment, some papyrus and some leather, were found and pieced together into 80 documents. Today, the majority of the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) have already been interpreted and published. Since 1965, they have been on display at the [Israel Museum](#) in a distinctive white pavilion called the Shrine of the Book, which has become a popular tourist site in Israel.

At first glance, the massive international interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls is baffling. The ragged pieces of parchment contain so much scribble in the eyes of many who look at them and are even difficult to decipher for those who know Hebrew. Yet the dry desert climate of the region meant that the parchments were amazingly well-preserved, and historians were able to uncover their secrets.

"The Dead Sea Scrolls represent a turning point in Jewish history," stresses Dr. Adolfo Roitman, curator of the Shrine of the Book. "They reveal the link between Biblical Israel and the Jewish culture of the

Talmudic period."

According to Dr. Magen Broshi, who served as curator of the Shrine of the Book from 1965 to 1995, it is the fascinating story behind the scrolls that has captured the world's imagination.

"Not only are the scrolls the oldest known copy of the [Old Testament](#)," he explains, "but they belonged to the [Essenes](#), a mysterious ascetic Jewish sect that existed about 2,000 years ago and is believed to have had a great influence on the early Christians." Most of the Essenes, who were mentioned by the contemporary historians Pliny and Josephus, lived on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea region. Nearly a third of the documents that were found in the caves of [Qumran](#) overlooking the Dead Sea contain the books of the Old Testament, save for the [Book of Esther](#). "The levity of the Book of Esther would not have been to the sect's taste," speculates Dr. Broshi. "The banquets, the drunkenness and Esther's flirtation with Ahasuerus would not have been approved of by the Essenes."

Many of the non-Old Testament scrolls contain details about the Essene sect and their values. One of the scrolls tells the story of the battle between the "sons of light and the sons of darkness" and echoes the struggle between good and evil. The Essenes included celibate men, a phenomenon rarely found in Judaism, and their influence on the early Christians is unquestionable, making the scrolls of immense interest to Christian, as well as Jewish scholars.

The 50 years since the scrolls' discovery have been marked by enthusiastic international debate as to the dating of the scrolls, the nature of the Dead Sea sect, and more. Controversy has also surrounded the slow pace of the publishing of the scrolls and the question of access to the scrolls. To mark half a century since the discovery of the first scrolls the Israel Philatelic Service issued a stamp depicting one of the ceramic jars in which the scrolls were found against a backdrop of the Judean Desert....

Undoubtedly these ancient manuscripts will remain a witness to Jewish continuity and a source of knowledge regarding the roots of Christianity for centuries to come.

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Source: Israel Magazine-On-Web, July 1997, [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Decapolis

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The Decapolis (Greek: "Ten Cities") was a region including 10 originally independent [Greek](#) city states, all of which lay east of the Jordan river except for Scythopolis [ancient [Beth Shean](#)]. Each city was the center of its own administrative district. Several were brought under Judean control by Aristobulus I and Alexander Jannai but were never Judaized. Pompey restored their nominal autonomy under the protection of the [Roman](#) governor of [Syria](#). Augustus placed Gadara and Hippos under [Herod](#). The synoptic gospels report several trips by [Jesus](#) into this largely non-Jewish region, but with imprecise geography. During the [Jewish revolt](#) [66-70 CE], Jewish Christians reportedly migrated to Pella.

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Source: [Into His Own](#)

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## The Diaspora

The Jewish state comes to an end in 70 AD, when the [Romans](#) begin to actively drive Jews from the home they had lived in for over a millennium. But the Jewish Diaspora ("diaspora" = "dispersion, scattering") had begun long before the [Romans](#) had even dreamed of Judaea. When the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722, the Hebrew inhabitants were scattered all over the Middle East; these early victims of the dispersion disappeared utterly from the pages of history. However, when Nebuchadnezzar deported the Judaeans in 597 and 586 BC, he allowed them to remain in a unified community in [Babylon](#). Another group of Judaeans fled to Egypt, where they settled in the Nile delta. So from 597 onwards, there were three distinct groups of Hebrews: a group in Babylon and other parts of the Middle East, a group in Judaea, and another group in Egypt. Thus, 597 is considered the beginning date of the Jewish Diaspora. While Cyrus the Persian allowed the Judaeans to return to their homeland in 538 BC, most chose to remain in Babylon. A large number of Jews in Egypt became mercenaries in Upper Egypt on an island called the Elephantine. All of these Jews retained their religion, identity, and social customs; both under the [Persians](#) and the [Greeks](#), they were allowed to run their lives under their own laws. Some converted to other religions; still others combined the Yahweh cult with local cults; but the majority clung to the Hebraic religion and its new-found core document, the [Torah](#).

In 63 BC, Judaea became a protectorate of Rome. Coming under the administration of a governor, Judaea was allowed a king; the governor's business was to regulate trade and maximize tax revenue. While the Jews despised the [Greeks](#), the [Romans](#) were a nightmare. Governorships were bought at high prices; the governors would attempt to squeeze as much

revenue as possible from their regions and pocket as much as they could. Even with a Jewish king, the Judaeans [revolted](#) in 70 AD, a desperate revolt that ended tragically. In 73 AD, the last of the revolutionaries were holed up in a mountain fort called [Masada](#); the [Romans](#) had besieged the fort for two years, and the 1,000 men, women, and children inside were beginning to starve. In desperation, the Jewish revolutionaries killed themselves rather than surrender to the [Romans](#). The [Romans](#) then destroyed [Jerusalem](#), annexed Judaea as a Roman province, and systematically drove the Jews from Palestine. After 73 AD, Hebrew history would only be the history of the Diaspora as the Jews and their world view spread over Africa, Asia, and Europe

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## Egypt and the Wanderings

(~1500-1250 BC)

### The Children of Israel in Egypt

However dim and uncertain Hebrew history is in the [age of the patriarchs](#), there is no question that the migration out of [Egypt](#) around 1250 BC is the single most important event in Hebrew history. More than anything else in history, this event gave the Hebrews an identity, a nation, a founder, and a name, used for the first time in the very first line of [Exodus](#), the biblical account of the migration: "bene yisrael," "the children of Israel."

How did this happen? How did this diverse set of tribal groups all worshipping a god they called "god," suddenly cohere into a more or less unified national group? What happened in Egypt that didn't happen with other foreigners living there?

Well, we really can't answer that question, for we have almost no account whatsoever of the Hebrews in Egypt, even in Hebrew history. For all the momentousness of the events of the migration for the Hebrews and the dramatic nature of the rescue, including plagues and catastrophes raining down on Egypt, the Egyptians do not seem to have noticed the Hebrews or to even know that they were living in their country. While we have several Egyptian records of foreign groups during the New Kingdom, they are records of actively expelling groups they feel are threatening or overly powerful. The Hebrews never appear in these records, nor do any of the events recounted in the Hebrew history of the event. The Hebrews themselves are only interested in the events directly leading up to the

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migration; all the events in the centuries preceding are passed over in silence.

We can make some guesses about the Hebrews in Egypt, though. It isn't unreasonable to believe that a sizable Hebrew population lived in the north of Egypt from about 1500-1250 BC; enormous numbers of tribal groups, most of them Semitic, had been settling in northern Egypt from about 1800 BC. These foreigners had grown so powerful that for a short time they dominated Egypt, ruling the Egyptians themselves; this period is called the Third Intermediate Period in Egyptian history. When the Egyptians reasserted dominance over Egypt at the start of the New Kingdom, they actively expelled as many foreigners as they could. Life got fairly harsh for these foreigners, who were called "habiru," which was applied to landless aliens (taken from the word, "apiru," or foreigner). Is this where the Hebrews got their name? It's a hotly contested issue. Nevertheless, the New Kingdom kings also began to garrison their borders in the north and east in order to prevent foreigners from entering the country in the first place. In particular, the Egyptian king, Seti I (1305-1290), moved his capital to Avaris at the very north of the Nile delta. This move was a shrewd move, for it established a powerful military presence right at the entrance to Egypt.

Garrisoned cities, however, don't pop into existence at a whim; they are labor intensive affairs. Typically, building projects involved heavy taxation of local populations; these taxes took the form of labor taxes. It isn't unreasonable to guess that the heaviest burden of these taxes fell on the foreigners living in the area, which would include the Hebrews. As best as we can guess, we believe that these building projects form the substance of the oppression of the Hebrews described in Exodus.

## Moses and the Yahweh Cult

Nothing, however, should have prevented these oppressed and miserable foreigners from spilling into the anonymity of history—as so many had done before and since. One figure, however, changed the course of this history and united some of these foreigners into a distinct people; he also gave them a religion and a theology that would forever unite them in a singular purpose in history. That person was [Moses](#). In spite of the masterful portrayal of him in *Exodus*, he is a difficult figure to pin down. Few people dispute that Moses was a reality in history, whether as an individual or a group of individuals, but there are several perplexing aspects of the man. First, he has an Egyptian name (as do many of his

relatives). Second, he seems to spend a large amount of time among a non-Hebrew people, the Midianites, where he marries and seems to learn the Yahweh religion, and some of its cultic practices, from the Midianites. Are there two Moses, an Egyptian and a Hebrew? Or an Egyptian and a Midianite? And are the Midianites the first peoples to worship Yahweh and who then transmit this religion to the Hebrews? The question is complicated by the presence of Miriam, Moses' sister, in the migration. For she is the first individual in the Hebrew bible to be called a "prophet," and seems to have been an important player in the migration, possibly even being the principle figure in the climactic battle between the Egyptians and the Hebrews at the Sea of Reeds. At some point, however, there was a falling out between Miriam and [Moses](#), and Miriam gets lost to history.

It is equally difficult to pinpoint exactly who participated in the migration. Although the focus is on the Hebrews, *Exodus* claims that a "diverse group of peoples" left Egypt with [Moses](#). Who were these? Did they include other Semites? Was the migration to Egypt a staggered affair, or was it a single, heroic migration as indicated in *Exodus*? What resistance did the Egyptians put up? What was the nature of their battle with the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds? The account of this battle is vitally important to Hebrew history, for the deliverance of the Hebrews at the Sea of Reeds stands as the single most powerful symbol of Yahweh's protection of the Hebrews. *Exodus* gives two accounts; in the first, Yahweh blows the water away to create a ford, and the Egyptians get stuck in the mud and go home. In the second, Yahweh separates the waters and drowns the Egyptians when they try to cross. Which is the correct account?

It's difficult to answer any of these questions. In the end, the only account we have of the migration from Egypt is the Hebrew account. Several salient aspects give this narrative its foundational role in the Hebrew view of history. First, [Moses](#) is especially chosen by Yahweh to deliver Yahweh's people. In other words, Yahweh directly intervenes in history in order to bring about his purposes for his people. Second, the people of Yahweh become a national entity, identified by the name, "bene yisrael," rather than simply being a diverse group of tribes. They are united around a specific leader, [Moses](#). Third, the events in Egypt, including the plagues and the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites at the Sea of Reeds when pursued by the king's army, are meant to serve as the primary proof of God's election of the Hebrews. There's no question that these stories were told and retold among the Hebrews as the most important events of their history. For in the events leading up to and involving the migration from Egypt, Yahweh proved once and for all that he would use and protect the



Hebrews as the people, and the only people, selected by Yahweh. Third, Hebrew religion became the **Yahweh religion**. The Hebrews did not worship "Yahweh" before the migration, but learned the cult, according to *Exodus*, from [Moses](#) during the migration.

This introduction to Yahweh and the Yahweh cult occurred in the southernmost region of the Arabian peninsula, in an area around Mount Sinai. This area had been occupied by a nomadic, tribal people called Midianites. They seem to have worshipped a kind of nature god which they believed lived on Mount Sinai. It is here, living with a priest of the Midianites, called Jethro, that Moses first encounters Yahweh (on Mount Sinai) and learns his name for the first time. The name of god, which in Hebrew is spelled YHWH, is difficult to explain. Scholars generally believe that it derives from the Semitic word, "to be," and so means something like, "he causes to be." Nevertheless, when [Moses](#) returns to Sinai with the people of Israel and stays in the area (this period is called the **Sinai pericope**), Jethro declares that he has always known Yahweh to be the most powerful of all gods (was the Midianite religion, then, a religion of Yahweh?). During the Sinai pericope, all the laws and cultic practices of the new Yahweh religion are set down. The laws themselves come directly from Yahweh in the [Decalogue](#), or "ten commandments." The Decalogue is a unique part of the Hebrew Torah in that it is the only part of Hebrew scriptures which claims to be the words of god *written down on the spot*.

Whatever happened in the migration from Egypt to Canaan, it is clear that somewhere in this period the general laws and cultic practices of the Hebrews settled down into a definite form. These laws and this new cult of Yahweh would form the eternal character of the Hebrews down to the present day. What began as a "diverse group of peoples" has become one people, who then systematically begin to settle the land of the Canaanites.

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## Pharaoh

A Pharaoh is a king of ancient [Egypt](#). Literally, the word "Pharaoh" means "great house," and refers to the residence of the leader.

Three Pharaohs are mentioned at length in both the books of [Genesis](#) and [Exodus](#).

The first Pharaoh is mentioned when [Abraham](#) and [Sarah](#) are traveling through [Canaan](#) ([Genesis 12:14-20](#)). Abraham lied and told the Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister because he feared that Pharaoh would kill him in order to marry his wife. The Pharaoh does indeed desire Sarah for his wife, but becomes enraged that Abraham lied to him about his relation to her ([Genesis 13:18](#)).

The second Pharaoh is mentioned in [Genesis 41:40 and 41:45](#). [Joseph](#) became viceroy to Pharaoh, and married his daughter Asenath. This Pharaoh had a good relationship with [Jacob's](#) family and invited them to live in the land of Egypt during the famine in Canaan.

The third Pharaoh ([Exodus 1:8](#)) "did not know Joseph." He embittered the lives of the Israelites, making them collect straw and forcing them to do much heavy manual labor. He announced a decree that the Hebrew male babies should be killed ([Exodus 1:16](#)).

Pharaoh	Dates
Min/Menes	c. 3000
Cheops	2596-2573
Chephren	
Mycerinus	
Moeris	1844-1797
Sesostris	
Pheros	
Phampsinitus (Ramesses)	1305-1069
Asychis	945-924
Anysis	818-715
Dodecarchs	780-664
Sabacos	716-702
Sethos	
Psammetichus	664-610
Necos	610-595
Psammis (Psammetichus II)	595-589
Apries	589-570
Amasis	570-526
Psammenitus (Psammetichus III)	526-525

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4. [Herodotus Website](#).

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## Exile

**(597-538 BC)**

The [Chaldeans](#), following standard Mesopotamian practice, deported the Jews after they had conquered [Jerusalem](#) in 597 BC. The deportations were large, but certainly didn't involve the entire nation. Somewhere around 10,000 people were forced to relocate to the city of [Babylon](#), the capital of the Chaldean empire. In 586 BC, Judah itself ceased to be an independent kingdom, and the earlier deportees found themselves without a homeland, without a state, and without a nation. This period, which actually begins in 597 but is traditionally dated at 586, is called the **Exile** in Jewish history; it ends with an accident in 538 when the Persians overthrow the Chaldeans.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Chaldeans, only deported the most prominent citizens of Judah: professionals, priests, craftsmen, and the wealthy. The "people of the land" (*am-hares*) were allowed to stay. So Jewish history, then, has two poles during the exile: the Jew in Babylon and the Jews who remain in Judah. We know almost nothing of the Jews in Judah after 586. Judah seems to have been wracked by famine, according the biblical book, [Lamentations](#), which was written in [Jerusalem](#) during the exile. The entire situation seemed to be one of infinite despair. Some people were better off; when Nebuchadnezzar deported the wealthy citizens, he redistributed the land among the poor. So some people were better off. In addition, there were rivalries between the two groups of Jews. It is clear that the wealthy and professional Jews in Babylon regarded themselves as the true Jewish people.

The salient feature of the exile, however, was that the Jews were settled in a single place by Nebuchadnezzar. While the Assyrian deportation of Israelites in 722 BC resulted in the complete disappearance of the Israelites, the deported Jews formed their own community in Babylon and retained their religion, practices, and philosophies. Some, it would seem, adopted the Chaldean religion (for they name their offspring after Chaldean gods), but for the most part, the community remained united in its common faith in Yahweh.

They called themselves the "gola," ("exiles"), or the "bene gola" ("the children of the exiles"), and within the crucible of despair and hopelessness, they forged a new national identity and a new religion. The exile was unexplainable; Hebrew history was built on the promise of Yahweh to protect the Hebrews and use them for his purposes in human history. Their defeat and the loss of the land promised to them by Yahweh seemed to imply that their faith in this promise was misplaced. This crisis, a form of cognitive dissonance (when your view of reality and reality itself do not match one another), can precipitate the most profound despair or the most profound reworking of a world view. For the Jews in Babylon, it did both.

From texts such as *Lamentations*, which was probably written in [Jerusalem](#), and [Job](#), written after the exile, as well as many of the [Psalms](#), Hebrew literature takes on a despairing quality. The subject of *Job* is human suffering itself. Undeserving of suffering, Job, an upright man, is made to suffer the worst series of calamities possible because of an arbitrary test. When he finally despairs that there is no cosmic justice, the only answer he receives is that humans shouldn't question God's will. Many of the psalms written in this period betray an equal hopelessness.

But the Jews in Babylon also creatively remade themselves and their world view. In particular, they blamed the disaster of the Exile on their own impurity. They had betrayed Yahweh and allowed the Mosaic laws and cultic practices to become corrupt; the Babylonian Exile was proof of Yahweh's displeasure. During this period, Jewish leaders no longer spoke about a theology of judgment, but a theology of salvation. In texts such as [Ezekiel](#) and [Isaiah](#), there is talk that the Israelites would be gathered together once more, their society and religion purified, and the unified Davidic kingdom be re-established.

So this period is marked by a resurgence in Jewish tradition, as the exiles looked back to their Mosaic origins in an effort to revive their original



religion. It is most likely that the [Torah](#) took its final shape during this period or shortly afterward, and that it became the central text of the Jewish faith at this time as well. This fervent revival of religious tradition was aided by another accident in history: when Cyrus the Persian conquered Mesopotamia, he allowed the Jews to return home. This was no ordinary event, though. Cyrus sent them home *specifically* to worship Yahweh—what was once only a kingdom would become a nation of Yahweh.

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## Gadara

A city of the [Decapolis](#) eight miles southeast of the [Sea of Galilee](#) and seven miles east of the Jordan river. Situated at more than 1200 ft. above sea-level the site offers a breath-taking panorama of the surrounding region.

Gadara was a typical Hellenistic city that became a center of [Greek](#) culture under the Seleucids. It was the hometown of the Cynic philosopher Menippus [3rd c. BCE] who invented the genre of mocking narrative satire imitated by later Greek and Latin writers [e.g., Petronius' Satyricon] & birthplace of the poet Meleager [1st c. BCE] who compiled the first Greek poetic anthology.

In good satiric style [Mark](#) 5 portrays [Jesus](#) as expelling a demon named "Legion" — the basic unit of the [Roman](#) army — from the region of the "Gerasenes" (an inland city-state of the Decapolis south of Gadara high in the Jordanian mountains, miles from any major body of water). [Matthew](#) sets this incident closer to the Sea of Galilee in the territory of the "Gadarenes." Like the satires of Menippus, however, the setting of this exorcism story is purely imaginative, since there are no cliffs in the region of Gadara, much less Gerasa, that border on a lake. The site usually shown tourists as the location of this exorcism — Kursi below the slopes of the [Golan](#) 12 miles north of Gadara — has cliffs that descend to the sea but lacks evidence of a settlement in the 1st c. [CE](#) and or any association with either Gadara or Gerasa.

Source: [Into His Own](#)

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## The Great Assembly

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According to traditional Jewish historiography, the Great Assembly (*Anshe Knesset HaGedolah*) was an assembly of 120 rabbis that ruled in the period after the time of the prophets up to the time of the development of rabbinic Judaism in 70 CE. They bridge a period of about two centuries. The tradition teaches that they redacted the books of Ezekiel, the twelve minor prophets (The *Trei Asar*), and the books of [Daniel](#) and [Esther](#). They also composed the [Shemonah Esreh](#), the standing prayer (*Amidah*) of 18, later 19, prayers that are still recited by Jews today. They canonized the [Tanakh](#). Most important, they enacted a democratization of Jewish education, making the [Torah](#) the possession of all, instead of just the priestly class.

Historically, the Great Assembly described in [Nehemiah 8-10](#) was a public assembly of Jews who returned to [Israel](#) after the exile in [Babylonia](#). In this gathering the leaders and people of Israel rededicated themselves to the Torah as their inheritance and code of law.

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Source: [Shamash](#)

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## Hebron

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## Hillel and Shammai

In the first century [BCE](#), [Babylonian](#) born Hillel (later known as Hillel the Elder) migrated to Palestine to study and worked as a woodcutter, eventually becoming the most influential force in Jewish life. Hillel is said to have lived in such great poverty that he was sometimes unable to pay the admission fee to study [Torah](#), and because of him that fee was abolished. He was known for his kindness, gentleness, concern for humanity. One of his most famous sayings, recorded in [Pirkei Avot](#) (Ethics of the Fathers, a tractate of the [Mishnah](#)), is "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?" The [Hillel organization](#), a network of Jewish college student organizations, is named for him. Hillel and his descendants established academies of learning and were the leaders of Palestinian Jewry for several centuries. The Hillel dynasty ended with the death of Hillel II in 365 [CE](#).

Hillel the Elder's friendly adversary was Palestinian born Shammai, about whom little is known except that he was a builder, known for the strictness of his views. He was reputed to be dour, quick-tempered and impatient. Both lived during the reign of [King Herod](#) (37-4 BCE), an oppressive period in Jewish history because of the [Roman](#) occupation of Palestine. Shammai was concerned that if Jews had too much contact with the Romans, the Jewish community would be weakened, and this attitude was reflected in his strict interpretation of Jewish law. Hillel did not share Shammai's fear and therefore was more liberal in his view of law.

Hillel was the more popular of the two scholars, and he was chosen by the [Sanhedrin](#), the supreme Jewish court, to serve as its president. While



Hillel and Shammai themselves did not differ on a great many basic issues of Jewish law, their disciples were often in conflict. The [Talmud](#) records over 300 differences of opinion between Beit Hillel (the House of Hillel) and Beit Shammai (the House of Shammai). The [Rabbis](#) of the [Talmud](#) generally sided with the rulings of the School of Hillel, although the Sages believed that both views were valid. Sixteenth-century kabbalist [Rabbi Isaac Luria](#) (the “Ari”) said that not only are both the words of the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel enduring on the conceptual level, but each has its time and place on the pragmatic level as well. In our present world, we follow the rulings of the House of Hillel, but in the era of [Messiah](#), the majority opinion will shift in favor of the House of Shammai, and their rulings will then be implemented. The Ari believed that in our present reality, where divine commandments must be imposed upon an imperfect world, the rulings of the House of Hillel represent the ultimate in conformity to the divine will, while the rulings of the House of Shammai represent an ideal that is too lofty for our present state (which is why we perceive them as “stricter” and more confining), and can only be realized on the conceptual level. In the era of Messiah, the situation will be reversed: a perfected world will embrace the more exacting application of [Torah](#) law expressed by the House of Shammai, while the Hillelian school of interpretation will endure only conceptually.

Hillel's rulings were often based on concern for the welfare of the individual. For example with regard to the remarriage of an [aguna](#), whose husband is not known with certainty to be alive or dead, the view of Hillel (and most of his colleagues) was that she can remarry even on the basis of indirect evidence of the husband's death. Bet Shammai required that witnesses come forth with direct testimony before she was permitted to remarry. Another example of his leniency as compared with Shammai involves [converts](#); Hillel favored the admission of proselytes into Judaism even when they made unreasonable demands, such as one did by demanding that the whole [Torah](#) be taught to him quickly "while standing on one foot." Hillel accepted this person as eligible for conversion, whereas Shammai dismissed him as not serious about Judaism.

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["The Nullification of the Commandments."](#)

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## Idumea/Edom

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Idumea or Edom in Hebrew was the region south of Judea originally inhabited by the reputed descendents of Jacob's brother Esau. Edom was periodically subjected to Judea (under [David](#) & [Solomon](#) [10th c. BCE] & the [Maccabees](#) [2nd c. BCE]). Homeland of the house of Herod. There were no natural boundaries between Idumea & Judea, so the borders were always in flux. The distinction between Edomites & Jews was blurred by Johanan Hyrcanus' forced conversion of Idumea to [Judaism](#) [ca. 130 BCE]. During the 1st c. CE pressure by the Arab Nabateans pushed the territory of the Edomites to within 15 miles of [Jerusalem](#). The region was bounded by the city state of [Gaza](#) on the west and the [Dead Sea](#) on the east. Herod's wilderness fortress of [Masada](#) that served as the final base of Jewish resistance to [Roman](#) rule lay within its borders. After 70 CE Idumea was detached from Judea until it was captured by modern [Israel](#) in the [Six-Day War](#) [1967].

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### Jewish High Priests, from Herod to the Destruction of the Temple

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- Ananelus
- Aristobulus
- Jesus, son of Fabus
- Simon, son of Boethus
- Marthias, son of Theophilus
- Joazar, son of Boethus
- Eleazar, son of Boethus
- Jesus, son of Sic
- Ananus (Annas), son of Seth [NT]
- Ismael, son of Fabus
- Eleazar, son of Ananus
- Simon, son of Camithus
- Josephus Caiaphas, son in law of Ananus [NT]
- Jonathan, son of Ananus
- Theophilus, son of Ananus
- Simon, son of Boethus
- Matthias, son of Ananus
- Aljoneus
- Josephus, son of Camydus
- Ananias, son of Nebedus [Acts 24]
- Jonathas
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- Ananus, son of Ananus
- Jesus, son of Damneus
- Jesus, son of Gamaliel
- Matthias, son of Theophilus



- Phanas, son of Samuel

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## Jews of the Middle East

by Loolwa Khazoom

Upon examining the history and heritage of the Jewish people, we find that [Judaism](#) is deeply connected to the [Middle East](#) and [North Africa](#): [Sarah](#) and [Abraham](#) came from Mesopotamia, the land that is today [Iraq](#) — the same land where the first yeshivas and the [Babylonian Talmud](#) were developed. The festival [Purim](#) celebrates the liberation of ancient [Iranian](#) (Persian) Jews, and [Passover](#) tells the story of ancient [Egyptian Jews](#). Hebrew developed alongside other Semitic languages in the Middle East and North Africa and Jewish prayers and holiday cycles reflect the weather patterns of that region. (It was not, for example, meant to snow in the Sukkah.)

Regardless of where Jews lived most recently, therefore, all Jews have roots in the Middle East and North Africa. Some communities, of course, have more recent ties to this region: Mizrahim and [Sephardim](#), two distinct communities that are often confused with one another.

### The Beginnings of the Jewish People

Mizrahim are Jews who never left the Middle East and North Africa since the beginnings of the Jewish people 4,000 years ago. In 586 B.C.E., the [Babylonian Empire](#) (ancient Iraq) conquered Yehudah (Judah), the southern region of ancient Israel.

Babylonians occupied the Land of Israel and exiled the Yehudim (Judeans, or Jews), as captives into Babylon. Some 50 years later, the [Persian Empire](#) (ancient Iran) conquered the Babylonian Empire and

allowed the Jews to return home to the land of [Israel](#). But, offered freedom under Persian rule and daunted by the task of rebuilding a society that lay in ruins, most Jews remained in Babylon. Over the next millennia, some Jews remained in today's [Iraq](#) and [Iran](#), and some migrated to neighboring lands in the region (including today's [Syria](#), [Yemen](#), and [Egypt](#)), or emigrated to lands in Central and East Asia (including [India](#), [China](#), and [Afghanistan](#)).

[Sephardim](#) are among the descendants of the line of Jews who chose to return and rebuild Israel after the [Persian Empire](#) conquered the [Babylonian Empire](#). About half a millennium later, the [Roman Empire](#) conquered ancient Israel for the second time, massacring most of the nation and taking the bulk of the remainder as slaves to Rome. Once the Roman Empire crumbled, descendants of these captives migrated throughout the European continent. Many settled in [Spain](#) (Sepharad) and [Portugal](#), where they thrived until the [Spanish Inquisition](#) and [Expulsion of 1492](#) and the Portuguese Inquisition and Expulsion shortly thereafter.

During these periods, Jews living in Christian countries faced discrimination and hardship. Some Jews who fled persecution in Europe settled throughout the Mediterranean regions of the [Ottoman \(Turkish\) Empire](#), as well as Central and South America. Sephardim who fled to Ottoman-ruled Middle Eastern and North African countries merged with the Mizrahim, whose families had been living in the region for thousands of years.

In the early 20th century, severe violence against Jews forced communities throughout the Middle Eastern region to flee once again, arriving as refugees predominantly in [Israel](#), [France](#), the [United Kingdom](#), and the Americas. In Israel, Middle Eastern and North African Jews were the majority of the Jewish population for decades, with numbers as high as 70 percent of the Jewish population, until the mass [Russian immigration](#) of the 1990s. Mizrahi Jews are now half of the Jewish population in Israel.

## **Mizrahi Jews Around the World**

Throughout the rest of the world, Mizrahi Jews have a strong presence in metropolitan areas — Paris, London, Montreal, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, and [Mexico](#) City. Mizrahim and Sephardim share more than common history from the past five centuries. Mizrahi and Sephardic religious

leaders traditionally have stressed *hesed* (compassion) over *humra* (severity, or strictness), following a more lenient interpretation of Jewish law.

Despite such baseline commonalities, Middle Eastern and North African Mizrahim and Sephardim do retain distinct cultural traditions. Though Mizrahi and Sephardic prayer books are close in form and content, for example, they are not identical. Mizrahi [prayers](#) are usually sung in quarter tones, whereas Sephardic prayers have more of a Southern European feel. Traditionally, moreover, Sephardic prayers are often accompanied by a Western-style choir in the [synagogue](#).

Mizrahim traditionally spoke Judeo-Arabic — a language blending [Hebrew](#) and a local Arabic dialect. While a number of Sephardim in the Middle East and North Africa learned and spoke this language, they also spoke [Ladino](#)--a blend of Hebrew and Spanish. Having had no history in [Spain](#) or [Portugal](#), Mizrahim generally did not speak Ladino.

In certain areas, where the Sephardic immigration was weak, Sephardim assimilated into the predominantly Mizrahi communities, taking on all Mizrahi traditions and retaining just a hint of Sephardic heritage — such as Spanish-sounding names. In countries such as [Morocco](#), however, Spanish and Portuguese Jews came in droves, and the Sephardic community set up its own synagogues and schools, remaining separate from the Mizrahi community.

## Diversity Within the Communities

Even within the Mizrahi and Sephardi communities, there were cultural differences from country to country. On [Purim](#), [Iraqi Jews](#) had strolling musicians going from house to house and entertaining families (comparable to Christmas caroling), whereas [Egyptian Jews](#) closed off the Jewish quarter for a full-day festival (comparable to Mardi Gras). On [Shabbat](#), [Moroccan Jews](#) prepared *hamin* (spicy meat stew), whereas Yemenite Jews prepared *showeah* (spicy roasted meat), among other foods.

As Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews are a minority of Jews in [North America](#), their heritage remains foreign to many North American Jews of Central and Eastern European heritage (known as [Ashkenazim](#)). Yet just as the world begins to embrace multi-culturalism, so too has the Jewish

community begun to acknowledge and celebrate the wonderful cultural diversity that exists among its own people.

*Loolwa Khazzoom (<http://www.loolwa.com>) is the director of the Jewish MultiCultural Project (<http://www.jmcponline.org>) and editor of The Flying Camel: and Other Stories of Identity by Women of North African and MiddleEastern Jewish Heritage (Seal Press, Fall 2003). She has published Jewish multicultural articles in numerous periodicals, including The Washington Post, Rolling Stone, Marie Claire, and Jewish Telegraph Agency.*

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## Joseph's Tomb

Joseph's Tomb is located in the heart of Nablus, in the [Palestinian Authority](#)-controlled [West Bank](#). Conflicting views exist as to whether or not the patriarch Joseph was buried there; nevertheless, the tomb is recognized as a Jewish shrine, albeit a minor one. According to Jewish tradition, Joseph was buried in the biblical town of Shechem, which is near the present-day city of Nablus. Some archeologists believe that the site is only a few centuries old and may contain the remains of a Muslim sheikh named Yossef.

Following the [1967 War](#), Israel regained access to the site and a small Jewish seminary was built there in the 1980's. The site was also used as a military outpost, and a number of soldiers were stationed there to protect the seminary students and the site itself. Nablus was returned to the Palestinians in 1995, but the Israelis retained control over the site.

When violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians began in the West Bank in October 2000, six Palestinians and one Israeli were killed in fighting around the tomb. The Israeli army subsequently agreed to withdraw on October 7 and turn over control of the site to the Palestinian police, who were supposed to guard it. Instead, the Palestinian Police stood by as a mob ransacked the site, burned books and destroyed reading stands; the mob also burned down the army outpost. On that same day, an American-born rabbi, who taught at the seminary, was found slain outside Nablus.

The Mayor of Nablus, Ghassan Shakaa, said that the site would be repaired. Workers were seen fixing the damage, however, they were also painting the top of the dome green - the color of Islam. Workers say that



they want to return the shrine to its former appearance before 1967, but news reports indicated the Palestinians were planning to build a mosque on the spot.

For Israelis, the destruction of a Jewish shrine raised serious doubts as to whether the [Palestinian Authority](#) would protect religious sites belonging to Jews and Christians and guarantee access to them. Israel guarantees access to all holy places under their control according to [1967 Law for the protection of the holy places](#).

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#### Sources:

Cohen, Richard. "Joseph's Tomb." [Washington Post](#), (October 10, 2000).  
Greenburg, Joel. "Palestinians destroy the Israeli site that was the scene of many clashes." [New York Times](#), (October 8, 2000).  
"Who is buried in embattled shrine: Joseph or Muslim sheikh? [CNN](#), (October 11, 2000).

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## Judges of Israel

Othniel	<a href="#">(3:7-11)</a> 1st Judge after Joshua's death
Ehud	<a href="#">(3:12-30)</a> Fought the Moabites
Shagmar	<a href="#">(3:31)</a> Led Israelites against the Philistines
Deborah	<a href="#">(4-5)</a> Prophetess, guided Barak to victory over the Canaanites, only female judge
Gideon	<a href="#">(6-8)</a> Defeated Midianites with 300 men
Abimelech	<a href="#">(9)</a> Only judge to win leadership through treachery
Tola	<a href="#">(10:1-5)</a> Judged Israel for 23 years
Yair	<a href="#">(10: 1-5)</a> Judged Israel for 22 years
Jephthah	<a href="#">(10:17-12:7)</a> Defeated Ammonites
Ibzan	<a href="#">(12:8-15)</a> Judged people for 7 years
Elon	<a href="#">(12:8-15)</a> Judge for 10 years
Abdon	<a href="#">(12:8-15)</a> Ruled for 8 years
Samson	<a href="#">(13-16)</a> Fought Phillistines singlehandedly
Eli	<a href="#">(1 Samuel 1:9)</a> Priest, ruled people from the sanctuary at Gilo

Samuel	Last judge before the kingdom came under the rule of Saul
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Source: [\*The Shengold Jewish Encyclopedia\*](#). NY: Shengold, 1998.

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## The Land of the Hebrews

The stage on which Hebrew history takes place is a varied and a troubled place. Hebrew history, as told by the Hebrews, begins in Mesopotamia, in the cities of Ur in the south and Haran in the north. Mesopotamia was a rich agricultural area, fed by irrigation from the two rivers which give it its name: the Tigris and the Euphrates. Powerful city-states, such as Ur, rose up in this fertile area, and these city-states would eventually become the foundation of mighty empires, such as the Akkadian and Amorite empires.

The Hebrews become a nation in another foreign land, Egypt. Rich with the water and soil carried by the Nile river, Egypt grew quickly into a great commercial and military power; the Egyptians created the *longest* continual culture outside of Asia. Punctuated by periods of decline and even foreign rule, the Egyptians had learned by the New Kingdom to ruthlessly control and subdue the foreign peoples surrounding their country. The Hebrews come into existence during this last powerful burst of power and creativity in Egypt.

Between this period, that is, the origins in Mesopotamia and the creation of the new nation in Egypt, Hebrew history centered around Palestine. This area was the special area of Hebrew history, for it was this area that the Hebrew god promised to his chosen people. In the Hebrew world view, this was *their* land given to them by the one and only one god, and it was to this land that the Hebrews would migrate to out of Egypt. On this land the various tribes would fight difficult and often losing battles of occupation, set up a kingdom, and then the briefest of empires.

What was this land? Its most salient geographical fact was that it lay between Mesopotamia and Egypt. It was the land bridge that carried all the

commercial goods between these two wealthy and powerful areas; it was also the highway on which armies would travel, whether Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, or Roman. More than anything else, this fact of geography determined the course of Hebrew history. Like a moon caught between the massive gravitational forces of two large planets, Palestine was in constant turmoil and under constant threat.

Although the Hebrews called it the "land of milk and honey," Palestine (named after the group that dominated it for much of its early history, the Philistines) was in fact a harsh environment. It appeared to be the land of milk and honey only to a group of people that had been, after all, living in the desert for several generations. The land itself is composed of four geographically self-contained longitudinal strips; the self-containment of these areas always made it difficult throughout history to create a unified state out of the entire area. The richest agricultural areas are along the Mediterranean coast, but this area was dominated first by Canaanites and then Philistines for a large part of Hebrew history.

The Hebrews controlled this area for only a very brief time during the monarchy. Because they could not dislodge these people, the Hebrews settled in the second area, the **central hill country**, a backbone of mountains running from north to south between the coastal areas and the Jordan River valley. Dry and rocky, the central hills are a very difficult place to live, but the spectacle of Hebrew history mainly takes place in this hill country: Galilee, Samaria, Megiddo, Shechem, Judah, [Jerusalem](#), [Hebron](#), Beer-sheba. To the west of the hills is the Jordan River valley. In Hebrew, the word Jordan means "the descender," for it begins at Mount Hermon in the north at about 200 feet above sea level, and literally plummets to the Sea (actually a lake) of Galilee ten miles south at 700 feet *below* sea level, and from there another two hundred miles to the Dead or Salt Sea at 1300 feet below sea level (the lowest piece of land on earth and a mightily inhospitable place to live). Along this valley and around the Sea of Galilee are rich farmlands yielding grains and fruit as well as wealthy fishing in the river and the Sea of Galilee. To the west of the Jordan River valley are the Transjordan Highlands (about 1500 feet above sea level). The climate can be harsh, but several rivers allow for rich agriculture. This area was largely occupied by non-Hebrews; in the Transjordan Highlands were the kingdoms of Edom (south), Moab (center), and Ammon (center). For most of its history, these lands were out of Hebrew control.

Source: [The Hebrews: A Learning Module](#) from Washington State University, ©Richard Hooker, reprinted by permission.

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## The Maccabees

(166-129 BCE)

By Mitchell Bard

The death of [Alexander the Great](#) of [Greece](#) in 323 [BCE](#) led to the breakup of the [Greek](#) empire as three of his generals fought for supremacy and divided the Middle East among themselves. Ptolemy secured control of [Egypt](#) and the Land of Israel. Seleucus grabbed [Syria](#) and Asia Minor, and Antigonus took Greece.

Palestine was sandwiched between the two rivals and for the next 125 years Seleucids and Ptolemies battled for the prize. The former finally won in 198 B.C. when Antiochus III defeated the Egyptians and incorporated Judea into his empire. Initially, he continued to allow the Jews autonomy, but after a stinging defeat at the hands of the [Romans](#) he began a program of Hellenization that threatened to force the Jews to abandon their monotheism for the Greeks' paganism. Antiochus backed down in the face of Jewish opposition to his effort to introduce idols in their temples, but his son, Antiochus IV, who inherited the throne in 176 B.C. resumed his father's original policy without excepting the Jews. A brief Jewish rebellion only hardened his views and led him to outlaw central tenets of [Judaism](#) such as the [Sabbath](#) and [circumcision](#), and defile the holy [Temple](#) by erecting an altar to the god Zeus, allowing the sacrifice of pigs, and opening the shrine to non-Jews.

### The Jewish Hammer

Though many Jews had been seduced by the virtues of Hellenism, the extreme measures adopted by Antiochus helped unite the people. When a Greek official tried to force a priest named Mattathias to make a sacrifice to a pagan god, the Jew murdered the man. Predictably, Antiochus began reprisals, but in 167 BCE the Jews rose up behind Mattathias and his five sons and fought for their liberation.

The family of [Mattathias](#) became known as the *Maccabees*, from the Hebrew word for "hammer," because they were said to strike hammer blows against their enemies. Jews refer to the Maccabees, but the family is more commonly known as the [Hasmoneans](#).

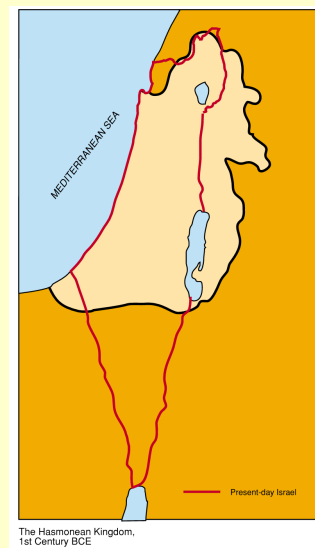
Like other rulers before him, Antiochus underestimated the will and strength of his Jewish adversaries and sent a small force to put down the rebellion. When that was annihilated, he led a more powerful army into battle only to be defeated. In 164 BCE, [Jerusalem](#) was recaptured by the Maccabees and the [Temple](#) purified, an event that gave birth to the holiday of [Chanukah](#).

## Jews Regain Their Independence

It took more than two decades of fighting before the Maccabees forced the Seleucids to retreat from Palestine. By this time Antiochus had died and his successor agreed to the Jews' demand for independence. In the year 142 BCE, after more than 500 years of subjugation, the Jews were again masters of their own fate.

When Mattathias died, the revolt was led by his son Judas, or [Judah Maccabee](#), as he is often called. By the end of the war, Simon was the only one of the five sons of Mattathias to survive and he ushered in an 80-year period of Jewish independence in [Judea](#), as the [Land of Israel](#) was now called. The kingdom regained boundaries not far short of [Solomon's](#) realm and Jewish life flourished.

The Hasmoneans claimed not only the throne of [Judah](#), but also the post of High Priest. This assertion of religious authority conflicted with the tradition of the priests coming from the descendants of [Moses'](#) brother [Aaron](#) and the tribe of Levi.



It did not take long for rival factions to develop and threaten the unity of the kingdom. Ultimately, internal divisions and the appearance of yet another imperial power were to put an end to Jewish independence in the Land of Israel for nearly two centuries.

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Source: Mitchell G. Bard, [\*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Middle East Conflict\*](#). 2nd Edition. NY: Alpha Books, 2003.

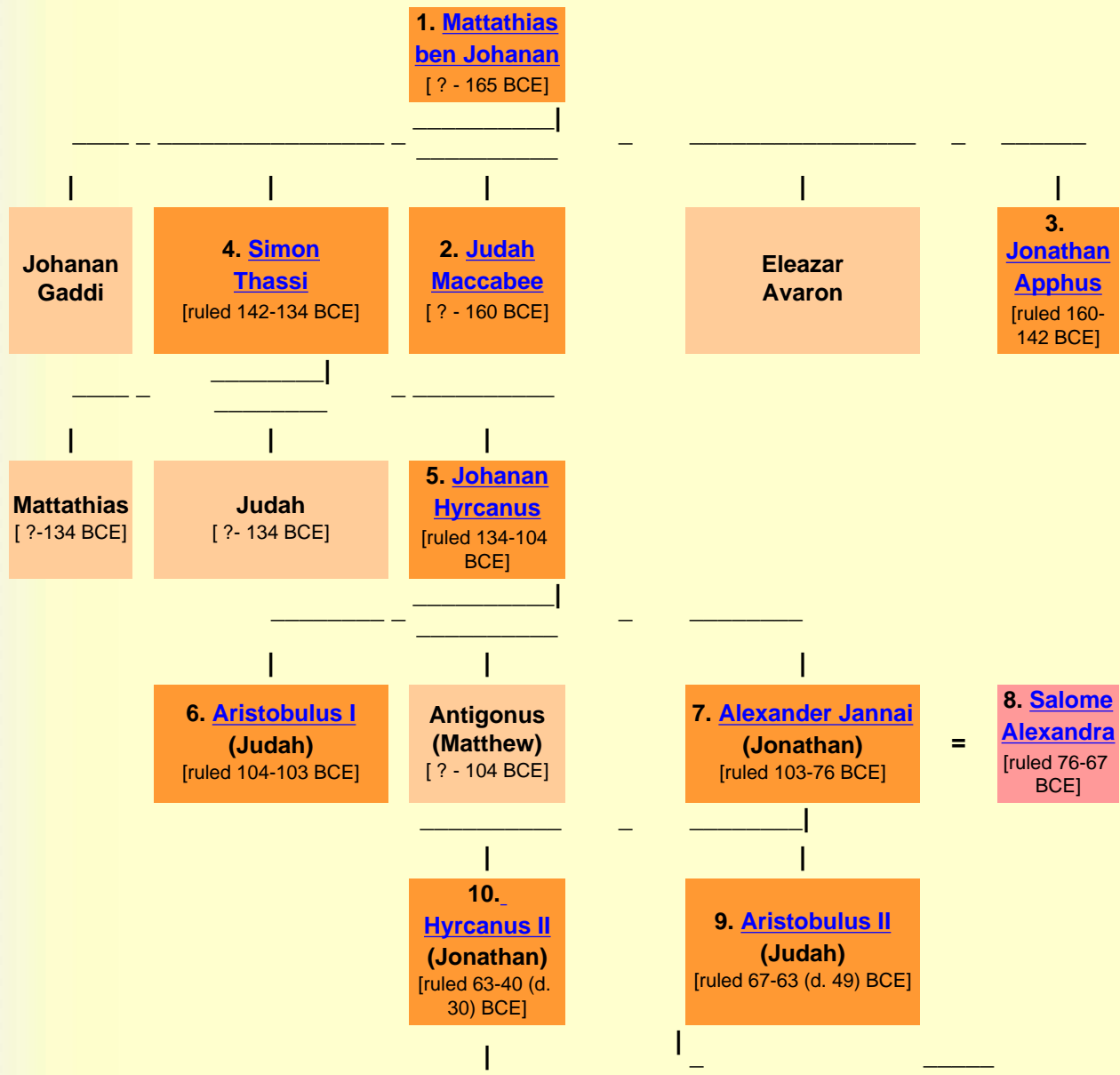
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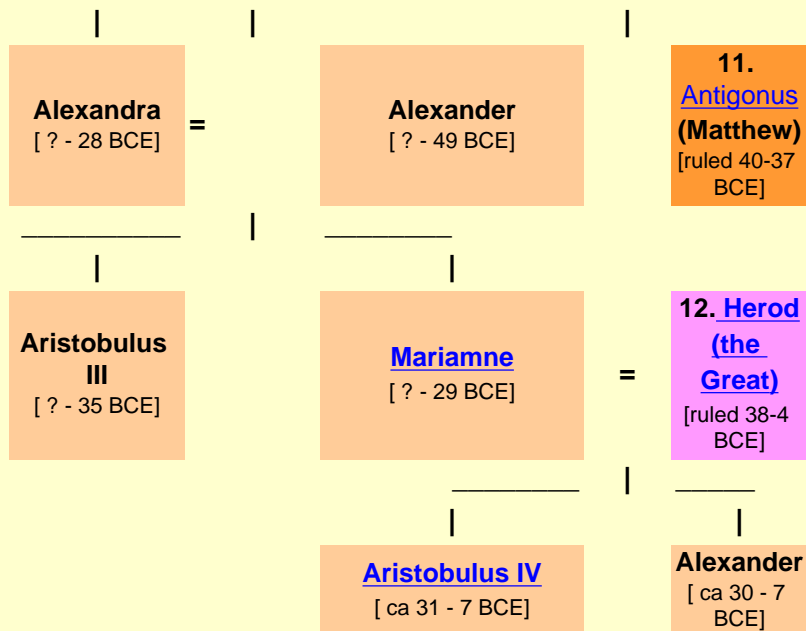
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## The Hasmonean Dynasty

### LINEAGE





Key			
	Leading Judean priest		Spouse of high priest
	Lesser descendents		Spouse of priest's daughter
=	double line > married		single line > descendents
1.	Numeral preceding name = order of succession		
Judah	Click on highlighted name for biographical sketch		

Source: [Into His Own](#)

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## Machaerus

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Machaerus (Greek: "The Sword") was a [Hasmonean](#) stronghold in [Perea](#) built by Alexander Jannai. As the base of Aristobulus' II resistance, it was destroyed by Pompey [64 CE] but later rebuilt by [Herod](#) on a grander scale, complete with a lavish palace and enough supplies to withstand a five-year siege. It was located five miles west of the mineral springs of Callirohe. According to [Josephus](#) it was the place where Antipas imprisoned and executed Johanan the Baptizer [Antiquities 18.118-119].

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## The Monarchy

(~1050-920 BC)

After two hundred years of only marginal success in occupying and holding lands in the Land of Israel, the Hebrews united to form a single state under a single monarch. During the early centuries in what the Romans later called Palestine, the Hebrews were ruled loosely by "judges," who seemed to exercise a limited amount of judicial, legislative, and even military control over the otherwise independent Hebrew [tribes](#). At times, various "deliverers" would lead some or all of the tribes against non-Hebrew oppressors or aggressors, and then fade again into history. Still, the tribes faced down the constant threat of invasion and oppression, and they still had not even remained firm in their Yahweh religion.

### Saul

The Hebrews, however, began to desire more permanent solutions to their political and military troubles. Looking to the Egyptian and Mesopotamian models of monarchy, particularly among their neighbors the Canaanites, Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites, the Hebrew tribes began agitating for a king. As recounted in the I Samuel and II Samuel, the Hebrews approached Samuel, the "judge" of Israel, and demanded a king. The account makes clear that both Samuel and Yahweh considered the desire for a king to be an act of disobedience towards Yahweh; the Hebrew people, according to Samuel, would greatly suffer for this disobedience. However, Yahweh, as happened with Moses and all other deliverers in Hebrew history, selected a king for the Hebrews and Samuel formerly anointed this new king with oil to symbolize his election as monarch. This was Saul; according to Hebrew history, he was chosen by

popular acclaim by the Hebrew people (which seems likely among a group without a king). He was chosen for his height and his good looks, but soon proved to be ineffectual. Saul was not, however, a standard Near Eastern king; he seems to have been largely a military leader. There are no accounts of him exercising monarchical power outside of military exploits. The Hebrews, after all, were still tribal people, so the transition to a monarchy must have been slow.

Saul was certainly not a wealthy monarch; the accounts of his kingship imply that he was no wealthier than any tribal leader. The Hebrew history of Saul, however, emphasizes his disobedience; because he repeatedly fails to carry out Yahweh's instructions as spoken by Samuel, Yahweh immediately chooses another king, David. Saul ruled as king only two years.

While it's hard to assess Saul's monarchy, one very important pattern emerges. It's clear that the monarchy is viewed as a negative development in Hebrew history—this is amazing considering that the account is written after centuries of Israelite and Jewish monarchs. In the Hebrew view of history, it represents the Hebrew refusal to be ruled by god in favor of a human ruler. In the history of the settlement of Canaan, the book of *Judges*, when Gideon is offered the monarchy, he replies, "You have no king but Yahweh." So the institution of the monarchy creates a new conflict: the conflict between Yahweh and the Hebrew monarchs. This conflict first rears its head in the relationship of Samuel, as judge of Israel, and Saul, as king of Israel. Samuel speaks the words of Yahweh; Saul disobeys them. This conflict would form the basis of a massive change in the nature of Hebrew religion, the "[prophetic revolution](#)," which is played out against the backdrop of the incongruence between rule by Yahweh and rule by a king. The most far-reaching, however, of the innovations of the monarchy was the centralization of government in Jerusalem, which had been unimportant up until that point. Under Solomon, Jerusalem would become the cultic center of the Yahweh religion; sacrifice to Yahweh would now only be possible in Jerusalem's temple and no-where else.

## David

The most difficult king to assess in the Hebrew monarchy is the second one, [David](#). Before Saul has even become king, Yahweh chooses another candidate on account of Saul's disobedience. He is a young and beautiful adolescent who becomes wildly popular in the court of Saul. Deeply suspicious, Saul at several times tries to kill the young David, but the

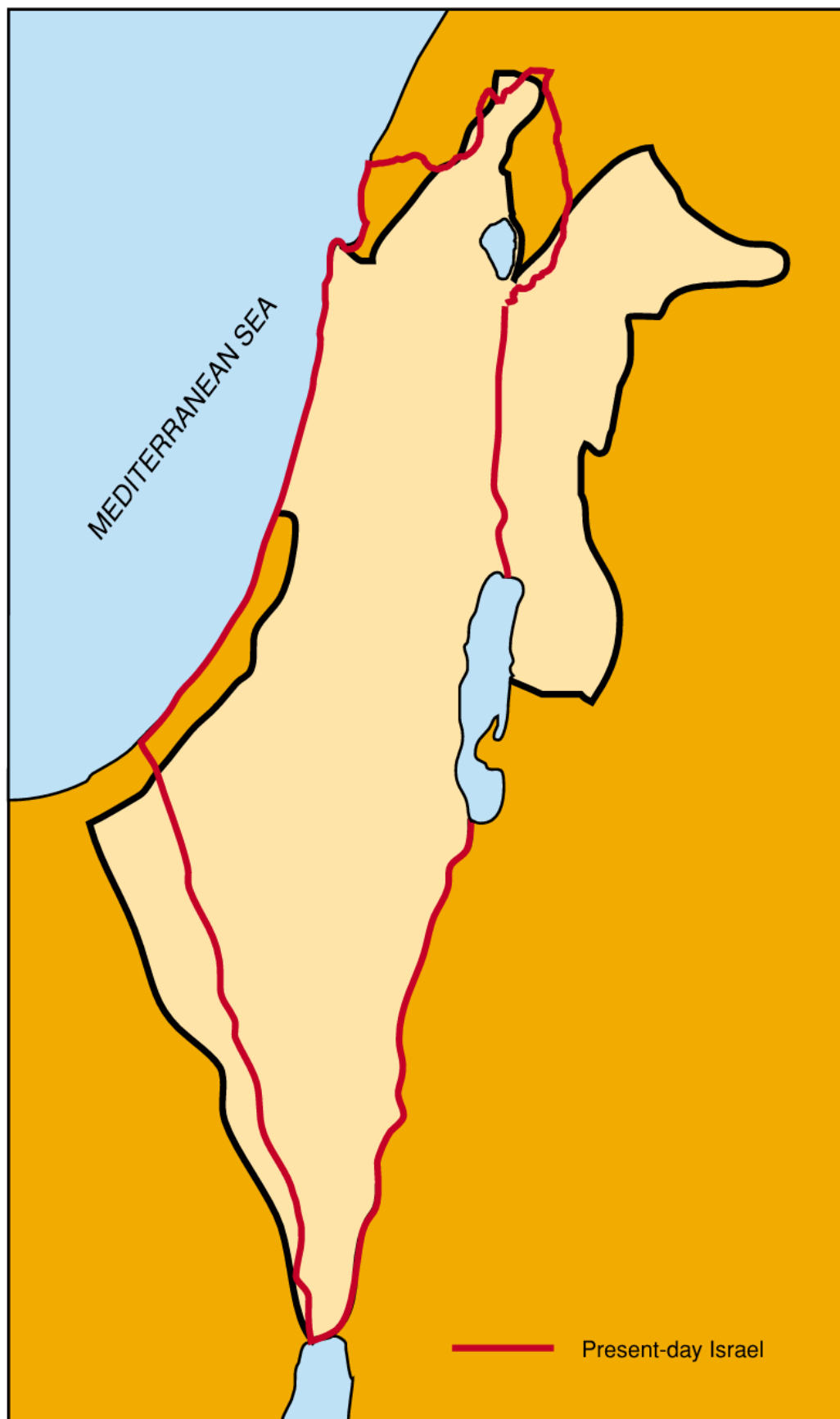
youth flees into the hills. When Saul kills himself, David returns and becomes king. The account of his kingship, however, is deeply ambivalent. While David is clearly a hero during the reign of Saul, his character gradually changes as king, until he commits a crime greater than any Saul had committed: he murders a man in order to marry his wife.

While the Hebrew judgment of David seems to be ambivalent, his accomplishments in his forty year reign are undeniable. After centuries of losing conflict, the Hebrews finally defeat the Philistines unambiguously under the brilliant military leadership of David. His military campaigns transform the new Hebrew kingdom into a Hebrew empire. An empire is a state that rules several more or less independent states. These independent states never fully integrate themselves into the larger state, but under the threat of military retaliation send tribute and labor to the king of the empire.

Most importantly, David unites the tribes of Israel under an absolute monarchy. This monarchical government involved more than just military campaigns, but also included non-military affairs: building, legislation, judiciaries, etc. He also built up Jerusalem to look more like the capitals of other kings: rich, large, and opulently decorated. Centralized government, a standing army, and a wealthy capital do not come free; the Hebrews found themselves for the first time since the Egyptian period groaning under heavy taxes and the beginnings of forced labor.

## **Solomon**

It is the third and last king of a united Hebrew state, however, that turned the Hebrew monarchy into something comparable to the opulent monarchies of the Middle East and Egypt. The Hebrew account portrays a wise and shrewd king, the best of all the kings of Israel. The portrait, however, isn't completely positive and some troubling aspects emerge.



Kingdom of David and Solomon,  
10th Century BCE

What emerges from the portrait of [Solomon](#) is that he desired to be a king

along the model of Mesopotamian kings. He built a fabulously wealthy capital in [Jerusalem](#) with a magnificent palace and an enormous temple attached to that palace (this would become the temple of Jerusalem). He took 700 wives and over 300 concubines, most of whom were non-Hebrew (in the book of [Judges](#) , Yahweh forbids all male Hebrews to marry non-Hebrews). All of this building and wealth involved imported products: gold, copper, and cedar, which were unavailable in Israel. So Solomon taxed his people heavily, and what he couldn't pay for in taxes, he paid for in land and people. He gave twenty towns to foreign powers, and he paid Pheonicia in slave labor: every three months, 30,000 Hebrews had to perform slave labor for the King of Tyre. This, it would seem, is what Samuel meant when he said the people would pay dearly for having a king.

While the author of [II Samuel](#), the biblical account of Solomon's reign, portrays Solomon as a good king it's clear from the account that the Hebrews living under him did not think so. Groaning under the oppression of Solomon, the Hebrews became passionately discontent, so that upon Solomon's death (around 926 to 922 BC) the ten northern [tribes](#) revolted. Unwilling to be ruled by Solomon's son, Rehoboam, these tribes successfully seceded and established their own kingdom. The great empire of David and Solomon was gone never to be seen again; in its place were two mighty kingdoms which lost all the territory of David's once proud empire within one hundred years of Solomon's passing.

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## The Two Kingdoms

**(~920-597 BC)**

The experiment with the opulence and power of the great eastern kingdoms had ended in disaster for Israel. Solomon created the wealthiest and most powerful central government the Hebrews would ever see, but he did so at an impossibly high cost. Land was given away to pay for his extravagances, and people were sent into forced labor into Tyre in the north. When [Solomon](#) died (between 926-922 BC), the ten northern tribes refused to submit to his son, Rehoboam, and revolted. From this point on, there would be two kingdoms of Hebrews: in the north, Israel, and in the south, Judah. The Israelites formed their capital in the city of Samaria, and the Judaeans kept their capital in [Jerusalem](#). These kingdoms remained separate states for over two hundred years.

Their history is a litany of ineffective, disobedient, and corrupt kings. When the Hebrews had first asked for a king, in the book of [Judges](#), they were told that only Yahweh was their king. When they approached Samuel, he told them the desire for a king was an act of disobedience. They would pay dearly if they established a monarchy. The history told in the Hebrew books, [I](#) and [II Kings](#), bears out Samuel's warning. The Hebrew empire soon collapses; Moab soon successfully revolts against Judah, and Ammon successfully secedes from Israel. Within a century of Solomon's death, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are tiny little states, each no bigger than Connecticut, on the larger map of the Middle East.





The Divided Kingdom,  
10th - 6th Century BCE

The bad news, of course, is that tiny states never survived in that region.

Located directly between the Mesopotamian kingdoms in the northeast and the powerful state of [Egypt](#) in the southwest, Israel and Judah were of the utmost commercial and military importance to all these warring powers. Being small and weak was a liability, and Israel was the first to learn this lesson.

## The Conquest of Israel

In 722 BC, the [Assyrians](#) conquered Israel. The Assyrians were aggressive and effective; the history of their dominance over the Middle East is a history of constant warfare. In order to assure that conquered territories would remain pacified, the Assyrians would force many of the native inhabitants to relocate to other parts of their empire. They almost always chose the upper and more powerful classes, for they had no reason to fear the general mass of a population. They would then send Assyrians to relocate in the conquered territory.

When they conquered Israel, they forced the ten tribes to scatter throughout their empire. For all practical purposes, you might consider this a proto-[Diaspora](#) ("diaspora"="scattering"), except that these Israelites disappear from history permanently; they are called "the ten lost tribes of Israel." Why this happened is difficult to assess. The Assyrians did not settle the Israelites in one place, but scattered them in small populations all over the Middle East. When the [Babylonians](#) later conquered Judah, they, too, relocate a massive amount of the population. However, they move that population to a *single* location so that the Jews can set up a separate community and still retain their religion and identity. The Israelites deported by the Assyrians, however, do not live in separate communities and soon drop their Yahweh religion and their Hebrew names and identities.

## The Samaritans

One other consequence of the Assyrian invasion of Israel involved the settling of Israel by Assyrians. This group settled in the capital of Israel, Samaria, and they took with them Assyrian gods and cultic practices. But the people of the Middle East were above everything else highly superstitious. Even the Hebrews didn't necessarily deny the existence or power of other peoples' gods—just in case. Conquering peoples constantly feared that the local gods would wreak vengeance on them. Therefore, they would adopt the local god or gods into their religion and cultic practices. Within a short time, the Assyrians in Samaria were worshipping

Yahweh as well as their own gods; within a couple centuries, they would be worshipping Yahweh exclusively. Thus was formed the only major schism in the Yahweh religion: the schism between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans, who were Assyrian and therefore non-Hebrew, adopted almost all of the Hebrew Torah and cultic practices; unlike the Jews, however, they believed that they could sacrifice to God outside of the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews frowned on the Samaritans, denying that a non-Hebrew had any right to be included among the chosen people and angered that the Samaritans would dare to sacrifice to Yahweh outside of Jerusalem. The Samaritan schism played a major role in the rhetoric of [Jesus of Nazareth](#); and there are still Samaritans alive today around the city of Samaria.

## The Conquest of Judah

"There but for the grace of god go I." Certainly, the conquest of Israel scared the people and [monarchs of Judah](#). They barely escaped the Assyrian menace, but Judah would be conquered by the [Chaldeans](#) about a century later. In 701, the Assyrian Sennacherib would gain territory from Judah, and the Jews would have suffered the same fate as the Israelites. But by 625 BC, the Babylonians, under Nabopolassar, would reassert control over Mesopotamia, and the Jewish king Josiah aggressively sought to extend his territory in the power vacuum that resulted. But Judah soon fell victim to the power struggles between Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians. When Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, became king, the king of Egypt, Necho (put into power by the Assyrians), rushed into Judah and deposed him, and Judah became a tribute state of Egypt. When the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in 605 BC, then Judah became a tribute state to Babylon. But when the Babylonians suffered a defeat in 601 BC, the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, defected to the Egyptians. So the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, raised an expedition to punish Judah in 597 BC. The new king of Judah, Jehoiachin, handed the city of Jerusalem over to Nebuchadnezzar, who then appointed a new king over Judah, Zedekiah. In line with Mesopotamian practice, Nebuchadnezzar deported around 10,000 Jews to his capital in Babylon; all the deportees were drawn from professionals, the wealthy, and craftsmen. Ordinary people were allowed to stay in Judah. This deportation was the beginning of the [Exile](#).

The story should have ended there. However, Zedekiah defected from the Babylonians one more time. Nebuchadnezzar responded with another expedition in 588 and conquered Jerusalem in 586. Nebuchadnezzar caught Zedekiah and forced him to watch the murder of his sons; then he

blinded him and deported him to Babylon. Again, Nebuchadnezzar deported the prominent citizens, but the number was far smaller than in 597: somewhere between 832 and 1577 people were deported.

The Hebrew kingdom, started with such promise and glory by [David](#), was now at an end. It would never appear again, except for a brief time in the second century BC, and to the Jews forced to relocate and the Jews left to scratch out a living in their once proud kingdom, it seemed as if no Jewish nation would ever exist again. It also seemed as if the special bond that Yahweh had promised to the Hebrews, the covenant that the Hebrews would serve a special place in history, had been broken and forgotten by their god. This period of confusion and despair, a community together but homeless in the streets of Babylon, makes up one of the most significant historical periods in Jewish history: the Exile.

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## The Kings of Israel

*The three original kings of Israel were [Saul](#), [David](#) and [Solomon](#). After the death of Solomon, the ten northern tribes revolted and established the kingdom of Israel in the north. The remaining tribes remained loyal to the son of Solomon and formed the [Kingdom of Judah](#) in the south.*

Jeroboam	928-907
Nadab (son of Jeroboam)	907-906
Baasha	906-883
Elah (son of Baasha)	883-882
Zimri	882
Omri	882-871
Ahab (son of Omri)	871-851
Ahaziah (son of Ahab)	851-850
Jehoram/Joram (son of Ahab)	850-842
Jehu	842-814
Jehoahaz (son of Jehu)	814-800
Joash/Jehoash (son of Jehoahaz)	800-785
Jeroboam II (son of Jehoash)	785-749

Zechariah (son of Jeroboam)	749
Shallum	748
Menahem	748-737
Pekahiah (son of Menahem)	737-735
Pekah	735-731
Hoshea	731-722

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## The Kings of Judah

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Rehoboam	928-911
Abijah/Abijam	911-908
Asa	908-867
Jehoshaphat	867-851
Jehoram/Joram	851-843
Ahaziah/Jehoahaz	843-842
Athaliah	842-836
Joash/Jehoash	836-799
Amaziah	799-786
Uzziah	786-758
Jotham	758-742
Ahaz	742-726
<a href="#">Hezekiah</a>	726-697



Manasseh	697-642
Amon	642-640
Josiah	640-609
Jehoahaz	609-608
Jehoiakim/Eliakim	608-597
Jehoiachin	597
Zedekiah	597-587

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### The Name “Palestine”

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The term “Palestine” is believed to be derived from the Philistines, an Aegean people who, in the 12th Century B.C., settled along the Mediterranean coastal plain of what is now Israel and the [Gaza Strip](#). In the second century A.D., the [Romans](#) crushed the [revolt](#) of [Shimon Bar Kokhba](#) (132 CE), during which [Jerusalem](#) and Judea were regained. Three years later, in conformity with Roman custom, Jerusalem was “plowed up with a yoke of oxen” and renamed Aelia Capitolina. Judea (the southern portion of what is now called the West Bank) was renamed *Palaestina* in an attempt to minimize Jewish identification with the land of Israel. The Arabic word “*Filastin*” is derived from this Latin name.

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## The Occupation of Canaan

### (~1250-1050 BC)

When the Hebrews arrive at Canaan, the land promised to them millennia earlier when God told [Abraham](#) at Shechem that the land would belong to his descendants, they begin the long, painful, and disappointing process of settling the land. There were, after all, people already living there. These people, the Canaanites, were a Semitic people speaking a language remarkably close to Hebrew. They were farmers, some were nomads, but they were also civilized. They used the great Mesopotamian cities as their model and had built modest imitations of them. They had also learned military technology and tactics from the Mesopotamians, as well as law. So the Hebrews, uncivilized, tribal, and nomadic, found themselves facing a formidable enemy. Even the accounts of this period in the Hebrew [bible](#), the books of [Joshua](#) and [Judges](#) paint a pretty dreary picture of the occupation.

After a few spectacular victories and some impressive territorial gains along the coastal plains, the Hebrews are eventually driven out of these areas and settle in the central hill country and a few places in the Jordan River valley. While they held their own against the Canaanites, a new player had arrived on the scene. These people, the Philistines, had rushed down from the north and overwhelmed everyone in their path. They had chariots and iron weapons and few could stand against these new technologies.

So the Hebrews found themselves living in the worst areas of Canaan, spread thinly across the entire region. The balance of power constantly shifted as local kingdoms would grab and then lose territory, and the

Hebrews would find themselves first under one and then another master.

## **The Judges and the Deliverers**

All during this period, the Hebrews rarely if ever organized into a single group. They were divided, rather, into separate tribes which administered themselves using tribal logic. There was no center of Yahweh worship (as there would be in later years), and no central government. There are, however, two types of figures that regularly dominate the landscape: the judges and the deliverers.

The judges are a curious sort and we're not sure what the office involved. What we do know is that they exercised some authority over all the tribes of Israel and were generally recognized by all the tribes. While the translation of the term, "judges," seems to imply judicial activities, that is, deciding disputes between tribes, the word in Hebrew, "shopetim" (-im is the plural), implies legislative duties as well. So it's possible that these "judges" exercised some kind of legislative and judicial control over matters involving all the tribes of Israel. Unlike the patriarchal age in which the "father" was the ruler, "judges" weren't gender specific. The most important "judge" of this period is, in fact, a woman: Deborah.

The deliverers (in Hebrew, "moshia") were specifically military commanders. They organized intertribal armies and led them into battle against foreigners: Philistines, Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, etc. They arose in times of the greatest oppression of the Hebrews and, in the Hebrew account of them, specifically elected by Yahweh to free the Hebrews from oppression. Most of the names are familiar: Gideon, Samson, etc.

The Hebrews themselves, however, do not seem to have settled comfortably into the Yahweh religion. According to Hebrew history, the Hebrews regularly abandon the Yahweh religion for local cults, particularly Canaanite cults. The Canaanite religion focussed on the god Baal, and the Hebrews frequently disassemble their Yahweh altars and build Baal altars. Those Hebrews that settle in the Canaanite cities literally disappear into the Canaanite religion; the Yahweh religion seems to have been largely maintained among the nomadic groups in the hill country.

Uncertain of their future, wracked by constant warfare and even civil war, and barely holding on to their Yahweh religion, the Hebrews would eventually long for the identity and stability of a unified nation and a

monarchy. This act of disobedience towards Yahweh (according to the Hebrew account) would turn this scattered group of tribes into a briefly glorious kingdom and empire.

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## Perea/Gilead

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Perea (from Greek: *peran* (*iordanou*) ["beyond Jordan"]) was a district on the east side of the Jordan river whose northern border was south of Pella in the [Decapolis](#) and whose southern border was guarded by the frontier fortress of [Machaerus](#). In antiquity the region had belonged to Israel's bitter rivals, the kingdoms of Ammon and Moab, which were conquered by [David](#) [10th c. BCE]. After [Solomon](#), during the time of the [divided monarchy](#) [9th-8th c. BCE], it was known as Gilead and was the homeland of [Elijah](#). For about 600 years the region was lost to Israelite control, but was reconquered by [Johanan Hyrcanus](#) [ca. 120 BCE] and its inhabitants forcibly converted to [Judaism](#). Augustus assigned Perea to [Herod](#), who willed it to Antipas. This was the area of the activity of Johanan the Baptizer [according to John 1], including his imprisonment & execution at Machaerus [according to [Josephus](#)]. According to the synoptic gospels, [Jesus](#) took the Jordan valley road through Perea that ran from the southern end of the [Sea of Galilee](#) to the ford at [Jericho](#) on his way to [Jerusalem](#).

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Source: [Into His Own](#)

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## Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes

By Mitchell G. Bard

Of the various factions that emerged under Hasmonean rule, three are of particular interest: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.

### The Pharisees

The most important of the three were the Pharisees because they are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. Their main distinguishing characteristic was a belief in an [Oral Law](#) that [God](#) gave to [Moses](#) at Sinai along with the [Torah](#). The [Torah](#) or Written Law was akin to the U.S. Constitution in the sense that it set down a series of laws that were open to interpretation. The Pharisees believed that [God](#) also gave [Moses](#) the knowledge of what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was codified and written down roughly three centuries later in what is known as the [Talmud](#).

The Pharisees also maintained that an [afterlife](#) existed and that God punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous in the world to come. They also believed in a [messiah](#) who would herald an era of world peace.

Pharisees were in a sense blue-collar Jews who adhered to the tenets developed after the destruction of the [Temple](#); that is, such things as individual prayer and assembly in [synagogues](#).

### The Sadducees

The Sadducees were elitists who wanted to maintain the priestly caste, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Hellenism into their lives, something the Pharisees opposed. The Sadducees rejected the idea of the [Oral](#)



[Law](#) and insisted on a literal interpretation of the [Written Law](#); consequently, they did not believe in an afterlife, since it is not mentioned in the [Torah](#). The main focus of Sadducee life was rituals associated with the [Temple](#).

The Sadducees disappeared around 70 A.D., after the destruction of the Second Temple (see below). None of the writings of the Sadducees survived, so the little we know about them comes from their Pharisaic opponents.

These two "parties" served in the Great Sanhedrin, a kind of Jewish Supreme Court made up of 71 members whose responsibility was to interpret civil and religious laws.

## The Dead Sea Sect

A third faction, the [Essenes](#), emerged out of disgust with the other two. This sect believed the others had corrupted the city and the [Temple](#). They moved out of [Jerusalem](#) and lived a monastic life in the desert, adopting strict dietary laws and a commitment to celibacy.

The Essenes are particularly interesting to scholars because they are believed to be an offshoot of the group that lived in Qumran, near the Dead Sea. In 1947, a [Bedouin](#) shepherd stumbled into a cave containing various ancient artifacts and jars containing [manuscripts](#) describing the beliefs of the sect and events of the time.

The most important documents, often only parchment fragments that had to be meticulously restored, were the earliest known copies of the Old Testament. The similarity of the substance of the material found in the scrolls to that in the modern scriptures has confirmed the authenticity of the Bible used today.

## Summary of Disputes Among the Three Parties

Sect:	Sadducees	Pharisees	Essenes
Social Class:	Priests, aristocrats	Common people	?
Figures of Authority:	Priests	"Disciples of the Wise"	"Teacher of Righteousness"
Attitude to Hellenism:	For	Selective	Against

<b>Attitude to Hasmoneans:</b>	Opposed usurpation of priesthood by non-Zadokites	Varied?  Opposed usurpation of monarchy?	Varied?  Personally opposed to Jonathan ("Wicked Priest")?
<b>Theology:</b>  1. Free will 2. Angels 3. Afterlife	1. Yes 2. No 3. None	1. Mostly 2. Yes 3. Resurrection	1. No 2. ? 3. Spiritual Survival (?)
<b>Attitude to Bible:</b>	Literalist	Sophisticated scholarly interpretations	"Inspired Exegesis"
<b>Attitude to Oral Torah:</b>	No such thing	Equal to Written Torah	"Inspired Exegesis"
<b>Practices:</b>	Emphasis on priestly obligations (for priests)	Application of priestly laws to non-priests ( <i>tithes</i> and <i>purity</i> rules)	"Inspired Exegesis"
<b>Calendar:</b>	?  Luni-solar (perhaps only under popular pressure?)	Luni-solar	Solar: 364-day year

Source: Mitchell G. Bard, [\*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Middle East Conflicts\*](#), NY: MacMillan, 1999. Chart courtesy of [Prof. Eliezer Segal](#).

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## The Philistines

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The Philistines are referred to as the descendants of the Casluchim in [Genesis 10:14](#) and [Exodus 13:17](#). Known as a seafaring nation, the Philistines were a non-Semitic people who left Crete and arrived in [Canaan](#) at the beginning of the 12th century [B.C.E.](#) The Philistines inhabited the Mediterranean coast of Canaan during the period of the [Book of Judges](#). They founded five principalities - [Gaza](#), [Asheklon](#), [Ashdod](#), [Ekron](#), and Gath.

Their highly-developed weapons brought a great threat to the Israelites. During the [Exodus from Egypt](#), the Israelites purposely took a southern route to circumvent them. The Philistines often battled against the Israelites. The first King of Israel, [Saul](#), temporarily weakened them. Later, a little-known shepherd by the name of [David](#) (later second King of Israel) defeated them after his battle with the large Philistine by the name of Goliath. The Philistines were reduced to mainly commercial ventures rather than military ventures. Throughout the [Books of Kings](#), different Jewish leaders fought the nation until the [Assyrians](#) completely defeated them. The Philistines then assimilated into the surrounding cultures and ceased to exist as a separate nation.

The name Palestine originates from the Philistine inhabitation of the land of [Judea](#). After the Romans conquered the region in the second century C. E., the Romans used the term *Palestina* to refer to the region in an attempt to minimize Jewish attachment to the land. The Arabic use of the term *Filastin* is from this Latin root.

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Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [\*The New Jewish Encyclopedia\*](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.  
Schreiber, Mordecai (ed.). [\*The Shengold Jewish Encyclopedia\*](#). Shengold Books. 1998.  
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[Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## The Return to Zion

### (538-142 BCE)

Following a decree by the Persian King Cyrus, conqueror of the Babylonian empire (538 [BCE](#)), some 50,000 Jews set out on the First Return to the Land of Israel, led by Zerubabel, a descendant of the House of David. Less than a century later, the Second Return was led by Ezra the Scribe. Over the next four centuries, the Jews knew varying degrees of self-rule under Persian (538-333 BCE) and later Hellenistic (Ptolemaic and Seleucid) overlordship (332-142 BCE).

The repatriation of the Jews under Ezra's inspired leadership, construction of the Second Temple on the site of the First [Temple](#), refortification of Jerusalem's walls and establishment of the [Knesset Hagedolah](#) (Great Assembly) as the supreme religious and judicial body of the Jewish people marked the beginning of the Second Jewish Commonwealth (Second Temple period). Within the confines of the Persian Empire, Judah was a nation centered in [Jerusalem](#) whose leadership was entrusted to the high priest and council of elders.

As part of the ancient world conquered by Alexander the Great of Greece (332 BCE), the Land remained a Jewish theocracy under Syrian-based Seleucid rulers. When the Jews were prohibited from practicing Judaism and their Temple was desecrated as part of an effort to impose Greek-oriented culture and customs on the entire population, the Jews rose in revolt (166 BCE). First led by Mattathias of the priestly [Hasmonean family](#) and then by his son Judah the Maccabee, the Jews subsequently entered Jerusalem and purified the Temple (164 BCE), events commemorated each

year by the [festival of \*Hanukkah\*](#).

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## The Sanhedrin

By Shira Schoenberg

The ancient Jewish court system was called the Sanhedrin. The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme religious body in Palestine during the time of the [Holy Temple](#). There were also smaller religious Sanhedrins in every town in Palestine, as well as a civil political-democratic Sanhedrin. These Sanhedrins existed until the abolishment of the rabbinic patriarchate in about 425 C.E.

The earliest record of a Sanhedrin is by Josephus who wrote of a political Sanhedrin convened by the [Romans](#) in 57 B.C.E. Hellenistic sources generally depict the Sanhedrin as a political and judicial council headed by the country's ruler.

Tannaitic sources describe the Great Sanhedrin as a religious assembly of 71 sages who met in the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#). The Great Sanhedrin met daily during the daytime, and did not meet on the [Sabbath](#), [festivals](#) or festival eves. It was the final authority on Jewish law and any scholar who went against its decisions was put to death as a *zaken mamre* (rebellious elder). The Sanhedrin was led by a president called the *nasi* (lit. "prince") and a vice president called the *av bet din* (lit. "father of the court"). The other 69 sages sat in a semicircle facing the leaders. It is unclear whether the leaders included the high priest.

The Sanhedrin judged accused lawbreakers, but could not initiate arrests. It required a minimum of two witnesses to convict a suspect. There were no attorneys. Instead, the accusing witness stated the offense in the presence



of the accused and the accused could call witnesses on his own behalf. The court questioned the accused, the accusers and the defense witnesses.

The Great Sanhedrin dealt with religious and ritualistic [Temple](#) matters, criminal matters appertaining to the secular court, proceedings in connection with the discovery of a corpse, trials of adulterous wives, tithes, preparation of Torah Scrolls for the king and the Temple, drawing up the calendar and the solving of difficulties relating to ritual law.

In about 30 C.E., the Great Sanhedrin lost its authority to inflict capital punishment. After the Temple was destroyed, so was the Great Sanhedrin. A Sanhedrin in Yavneh took over many of its functions, under the authority of Rabban Gamliel. The rabbis in the Sanhedrin served as judges and attracted students who came to learn their oral traditions and scriptural interpretations. From Yavneh, the Sanhedrin moved to different cities in the Galilee, eventually ending up in [Tiberias](#).

Local Sanhedrins consisted of different numbers of sages, depending on the nature of the offenses it dealt with. For example, only a Sanhedrin of 71 could judge a whole tribe, a false prophet or the high priest. There were Sanhedrins of 23 for capital cases and of three scholars to deal with civil or lesser criminal cases.

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## The Seven Species

*"A land of wheat, and barley, and vines; of fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey."*

The Seven Species may no longer dominate the diet of modern Israelis - but the biblical seven species still characterize the local landscape. They were the staple foods consumed by the Jewish people in the Land of Israel during biblical times. In modern Israel – with dozens of species in a diverse diet – only wheat remains a staple. However, the seven species dominate large areas of the countryside, accentuating a sense of continuity between the biblical Land of Israel and the modern state.

*Olives:* More than any other fruit, the olive symbolizes this continuity. The gnarled barks of the ancient olive trees on Israel's terraced hillsides seem to exude a wisdom accumulated from witnessing centuries of human history. In ancient times, olive oil was used to cook, to light lamps and as soap and skin conditioner. Today, the olive remains a popular food and its golden oil is a coveted commodity. Moreover, olive oil has become more popular since the discovery that it lowers cholesterol. Olive wood, with light and dark grains, is popular for small decorative items, while the olive branch persists as a symbol of peace.

*Grapes:* During the parched heat of the late summer, the grapevines lend the countryside a welcome rich green hue as the vines bear their fruit. Wine has always been an integral part of the [rituals](#) of Judaism, as in the "kiddush" blessing on [Sabbath](#) and [holidays](#). In ancient times, grapes were also used for seasoning and in vinegars. Today wine is a major industry, and over the past decade high-quality kosher wines have become widespread while nearly 100 "boutique" wineries have sprung up.

Moreover, because grapes, especially dark grapes, are rich in iron, the fruit is recommended to ward off heart disease. Stuffed with meat and rice, the leaves of the vine make a popular dish.

*Wheat:* With a cool and wet winter followed by a dry spring, Israel's climate is ideal for wheat growing. Today the northern Negev is the bread basket of Israel. In winter the fields around Kiryat Gat are a rich green, turning a glorious golden color in the late spring before the harvest begins during the festival of [Shavuot](#). In biblical times as today, bread was the staple of the local diet. The modern Israeli supermarket bulges with a choice of local breads like *halla* and *pita* as well as imported concepts like the baguette and standard sliced loaf.

*Barley:* In biblical times barley was the poor-man's staple - eaten as porridge and barley cakes. Cattle and other livestock were also fed barley. Today, the grain has become a marginal culinary ingredient used in soups and stews. Barley's most common modern use in Israel is as the basic ingredient for beer, sold locally in bottles and cans and served in pubs from the barrel.

*Figs:* The fig tree — with its distinctive leaves, used as clothes by Adam and Eve - is a ubiquitous part of the Israeli landscape. In biblical times the fig was eaten fresh or as a seasoning, in addition to being used to make honey and alcohol. The fig itself, ripe in midsummer, is today an expensive delicacy. In fact it is best eaten straight from the tree in the late afternoon after being baked naturally by the sun. Dried figs covered in sugar are also a popular item.

*Dates:* Date palms are only found in the hotter inland rift valley. In biblical times they grew in the Jordan Valley, but with modern irrigation techniques the palms have also taken root near the Dead Sea and further south in the Arava. In the biblical era dates were made into honey, and many believe the notion of the "land flowing with milk and honey" actually referred to date honey. Today, dates are a popular sweet snack before or after meals and fetch premium prices for export to Europe.

*Pomegranates:* Pomegranate trees are prevalent in Israeli gardens. The tree with its rich green leaves and red flowers becomes heavy with fruit for [Rosh Hashanah](#) (New Year) The plump red fruits are often plucked to decorate the *succa* during the feast of [Sukkot](#) (Tabernacles). In biblical times the pomegranate was used for making wine and seasonings in addition to its function as a dye. Then, too, it was appreciated for its

aesthetic qualities, particularly the crown near the stem. Tradition has it that a pomegranate has 613 seeds to represent the [613 commandments](#) in the [Torah](#) (five books of Moses). Today the pomegranate is traditionally eaten on the New Year although rarely otherwise, and occasionally used for flavoring in cooking.

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Source: [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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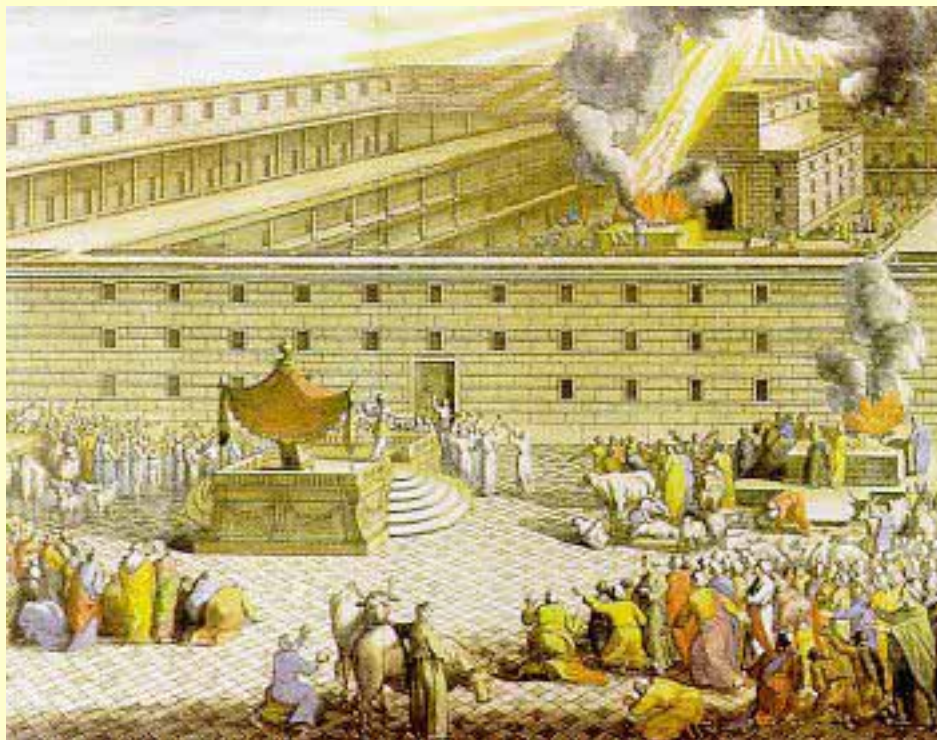
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## The Temple

The crowning achievement of [King Solomon's](#) reign was the erection of a magnificent Temple (*Beit ha-Midkash*) in [Jerusalem](#). His father, [King David](#), had wanted to build a great Temple for God a generation earlier, as a permanent resting place for the [Ark](#) containing the [Ten Commandments](#). A divine edict, however, had forbidden him from doing so. "You will not build a house for My name," God said to him, "for you are a man of battles and have shed blood" ([I Chronicles 28:3](#)).



The Bible's description of Solomon's Temple suggests that the inside ceiling was 180 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet high. The highest



point on the Temple that King Solomon built was actually 120 cubits tall (about 20 stories or about 207 feet). According to the [Tanach \(II Chronicles\)](#):

3:3 The length by cubits after the ancient measure was threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits.

3:4 And the porch that was before the house, the length of it, according to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and the height a hundred and twenty; and he overlaid it within with pure gold.

He spares no expense in the building's creation. He orders vast quantities of cedar from King Hiram of Tyre ([I Kings 5:20-25](#)), has huge blocks of the choicest stone quarried, and commands that the building's foundation be laid with hewn stone. To complete the massive project, he imposes forced labor on all his subjects, drafting people for work shifts lasting a month at a time. Some 3,300 officials are appointed to oversee the Temple's erection ([5:27-30](#)). Solomon assumes such heavy debts in building the Temple that he is forced to pay off King Hiram with twenty towns in the Galilee ([I Kings 9:11](#)).

When the Temple is completed, Solomon inaugurates it with prayer and [sacrifice](#), and even invites non-Jews to come and pray there. He urges God to pay particular heed to their prayers: "Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You, as does Your people Israel; and they will recognize that Your name is attached to this House that I have built" ([I Kings 8:43](#)).

Until the Temple was destroyed by the [Babylonians](#) some four hundred years later, in 586 [B.C.E.](#), [sacrifice](#) was the predominant mode of divine service there. Seventy years later, a second Temple was built on the same site, and [sacrifices](#) again resumed. During the first century B.C.E., Herod greatly enlarged and expanded this Temple. The Second Temple was destroyed by the [Romans](#) in 70 C.E., after the failure of the [Great Revolt](#).

As glorious and elaborate as the Temple was, its most important room contained almost no furniture at all. Known as the Holy of Holies (*Kodesh Kodashim*), it housed the two tablets of the [Ten Commandments](#).

Unfortunately, the tablets disappeared when the Babylonians destroyed the Temple, and during the Second Temple era, the Holy of Holies was a small, entirely bare room. Only once a year, on [Yom Kippur](#), the High



Priest would enter this room and pray to God on Israel's behalf. A remarkable monologue by a [Hasidic](#) rabbi in the [Yiddish](#) play *The Dybbuk* conveys a sense of what the Jewish throngs worshiping at the Temple must have experienced during this ceremony:

God's world is great and holy.  
The holiest land in the world is  
the land of Israel. In the land of  
Israel the holiest city is  
[Jerusalem](#). In [Jerusalem](#) the  
holiest place was the Temple,  
and in the Temple the holiest  
spot was the Holy of Holies....  
There are seventy peoples in the  
world. The holiest among these

is the people of Israel. The holiest of the people of Israel is the tribe of Levi. In the tribe of Levi the holiest are the priests. Among the priests, the holiest was the High Priest.... There are 354 days in the [lunar] year. Among these, the holidays are holy. Higher than these is the holiness of the Sabbath. Among Sabbaths, the holiest is the Day of Atonement, the Sabbath of Sabbaths.... There are seventy languages in the world. The holiest is Hebrew. Holier than all else in this language is the holy Torah, and in the Torah the holiest part is the [Ten Commandments](#). In the [Ten Commandments](#) the holiest of all words is the name of God.... And once during the year, at a certain hour, these four supreme sanctities of the world were joined with one another. That was on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and there utter the name of God. And because this hour was beyond measure holy and awesome, it was the time of utmost peril not only for the High Priest but for the whole of Israel. For if in this hour there had, God forbid, entered the mind of the High Priest a false or sinful thought, the entire world would have been destroyed.

To this day, traditional Jews pray three times a day for the Temple's restoration. During the centuries the [Muslims](#) controlled Palestine, two



mosques were built on the site of the Jewish Temple. (This was no coincidence; it is a common Islamic custom to build mosques on the sites of other people's holy places.) Since any attempt to level these mosques would lead to an international Muslim holy war (*jihad*) against Israel, the Temple cannot be rebuilt in the foreseeable future.

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Source: Joseph Telushkin. [\*Jewish Literacy\*](#). NY: William Morrow and Co., 1991. Reprinted by permission of the author.

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## Timeline for the History of Judaism

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- [Context of Ancient Israelite Religion \(ca. 2000-587 B.C.E.\)](#)
- [Judaism After the Babylonian Exile \(ca. 538 B.C.E.-70 CE\)](#)
- [Rule of Rome \(ca. 146 B.C.E.-400 C.E.\)](#)
- [Early Christian Period of Development \(30-311 C.E.\)](#)
- [Rabbinic Jewish Period of Talmud Development \(70-400/600 C.E.\)](#)
- [Byzantine Rule \(313-636\)](#)
- [Consolidation & Dominance of Classical Christianity \(325-590\)](#)
- ["Medieval" Period in the West \(ca. 600-1500\)](#)
- [Reception & Classical Development of Muhammad's Islamic Message \(570-1258\)](#)
- [Crusades \(1095-1258\)](#)
- [Further Transitions and Rebuilding of Political Islam \(1258-1500\)](#)
- [Mamluk Rule \(1291-1516\)](#)
- [Reformation and Post-Reformation Christian Period \(1517-Present - Here to 1569\)](#)
- [Dominance of Ottoman Muslim Empire in Turkey \(1500-1920\)](#)
- [Jewish Modern and Contemporary Periods \(ca. 1700-Present - 1921\)](#)
- [Islamic Unrest and Realignment in the Middle East \(ca. 1914-Present - Here to 1918\)](#)
- [British Rule in Palestine \(1918-47\)](#)
- [Modern Israel & the Diaspora \(1947-2004\)](#)
- [Timeline for the History of Jerusalem \(4500 B.C.E.-Present\)](#)

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### Timeline for the History of Jerusalem

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#### **Chalcolithic Period (4500-3200 BCE)**

3500 BCE: First Settlement.

#### **Early Bronze Age (3200-2220 BCE)**

2500 BCE: First Houses.

#### **Middle Bronze Age (2220-1550 BCE)**

1800 BCE: First City Wall.

#### **Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BCE)**

1400 BCE: Mention of [Jerusalem](#) in [cuneiform Amarna](#) letters.

#### **Iron Age I (1200-1000 BCE)**

Jerusalem is a [Canaanite](#) (Jebusite) city.

#### **Iron Age II (1000-539 BCE)**

1000 BCE: [King David](#) conquers [Jerusalem](#).

960 BCE: [King Solomon](#) builds [First Temple](#).

721 BCE: [Assyrians](#) conquer Samaria. Refugees flee to [Jerusalem](#). City expands onto western hill.

701 BCE: Assyrian ruler Sennacherib besieges [Jerusalem](#).

586 BCE: [Babylonian](#) destruction of [Jerusalem](#).

### **Persian Period (539-322 BCE)**

539 BCE: [Persian](#) ruler Cyrus the Great conquers Babylonian Empire.

516 BCE: [Second Temple](#) built.

445-425 BCE: Nehemiah rebuilds walls. City confined to eastern hill.

332 BCE: [Alexander the Great](#) conquers [Judaea](#).

### **Hellenistic Period (332-141 BCE)**

[Ptolemaic](#) and [Seleucid](#) rule.

### **Hasmonean Period (141-37 BCE)**

141 BCE: [Hasmonean](#) Dynasty begins. [Jerusalem](#) again expands into the western hill.

63 BCE: Roman General Pompey captures [Jerusalem](#).

### **Herodian Period (37BCE-70 CE)**

37 BCE: [Herod](#) rebuilds Second Temple.

30 CE: Jesus crucified.

70 CE: [Romans](#) destroy Jerusalem.

### **Roman Period (70-324 CE)**

135 CE: [Jerusalem](#) rebuilt as a Roman city.

## **Byzantine Period (324-638 CE)**

335 CE: [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#) built.

614 CE: [Persians](#) capture [Jerusalem](#).

629 CE: [Byzantine](#) Christians recapture [Jerusalem](#).

## **First Muslim Period (638-1099 CE)**

638 CE: [Caliph Omar](#) enters [Jerusalem](#).

661-750 CE: [Omayyad](#) Dynasty.

691 CE: [Dome of the Rock](#) built.

750-974 CE: [Abassid Dynasty](#).

## **Crusader Period (1099-1187 CE)**

1099 CE: [Crusaders](#) capture [Jerusalem](#).

## **Ayyubid Period (1187-1250 CE)**

1187 CE: Saladin captures [Jerusalem](#).

1229-1244 CE: Crusaders briefly recapture [Jerusalem](#) twice.

## **Mamluk Period (1250-1516 CE)**

1250 CE: Muslim [caliph](#) dismantles walls of [Jerusalem](#). Population declines.

## **Ottoman Period (1516-1917 CE)**

1517 CE: [Ottomans](#) capture [Jerusalem](#).

1538-1541 CE: [Suleiman](#) the Magnificent rebuilds the walls of [Jerusalem](#).

## **Modern Period (1917 CE-present)**

1917: British capture [Jerusalem](#).

1948: [State of Israel established](#). [Jerusalem](#) divided.

1967: Israel captures [Old City](#) and reunifies [Jerusalem](#).

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Source: "Chronological Reference Points." *Middle East Insight*, January-February 1999.

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## The Twelve Tribes of Israel

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*[Jacob](#) fathered 12 sons. They are the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and the ones for whom the tribes are named. Each occupied a separate [territory](#) (except the tribe of Levi, which was set apart to serve in the [Holy Temple](#)).*

---

[Asher](#)

[Benjamin](#)

[Dan](#)

[Gad](#)

[Issachar](#)

[Joseph\\*](#)

[Judah](#)

[Levi](#)

[Naphtali](#)

[Reuben](#)

[Simeon](#)

[Zebulun](#)

(Around the Tabernacle and in order of their marches)

### The Eastern Tribes

[Judah](#)

[Issachar](#)

[Zebulun](#)

### **The Southern Tribes**

[Reuben](#)

[Simeon](#)

[Gad](#)

### **The Western Tribes**

[Ephraim](#)

[Manasseh](#)

[Benjamin](#)

### **The Northern Tribes**

[Dan](#)

[Asher](#)

[Naphtali](#)

\*The sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Menasseh, were also given the status of independent tribes.

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## Tyre

Tyre is a Phoenician city about 30 miles north of Ptolemaïs, built on a rocky island that [Alexander the Great](#) connected to the mainland with a half-mile causeway [333 BCE]. As the first [Canaanite](#) city to attain independence from [Egypt](#) [12th c. BCE] it took the lead in the Phoenician colonization of the Mediterranean including the founding of Carthage.

Tyrian purple dye from shellfish was so-highly prized in ancient times that it gave these seafaring traders their name: Phoenician ["purple people"]. Hiram [mid-10th c. BCE] built a breakwater that gave Tyre the best harbor on the eastern Mediterranean coast & established a mutually beneficial trade-alliance with [David](#) and [Solomon](#). Hiram supplied the craftsmen and cedar wood for the [temple](#) at [Jerusalem](#) and other building projects of Solomon. But a century later the marriage of Jezebel, the daughter of Eshba'al of Tyre, to Ahab provoked a cultural crisis in Israel that challenged Mosaic tradition and led [Elijah](#) to launch a holy war.

Tyre's island location made it hard for ancient empires to subdue, until Alexander conquered it [333 BCE]. Under [Hellenistic](#) and [Roman](#) empires, Tyre continued to flourish. Tyrian silver coinage was so pure that it was the only currency accepted in the temple at Jerusalem. According to the synoptic gospels [[Mark](#) 7], [Jesus](#) traveled through the region around Tyre & found supporters among its inhabitants. According to [Acts](#) 21, Paul landed there & stayed with local Christians on his way to Jerusalem.

Source: [Into His Own](#)

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## Via Maris

**By Avi Hein**

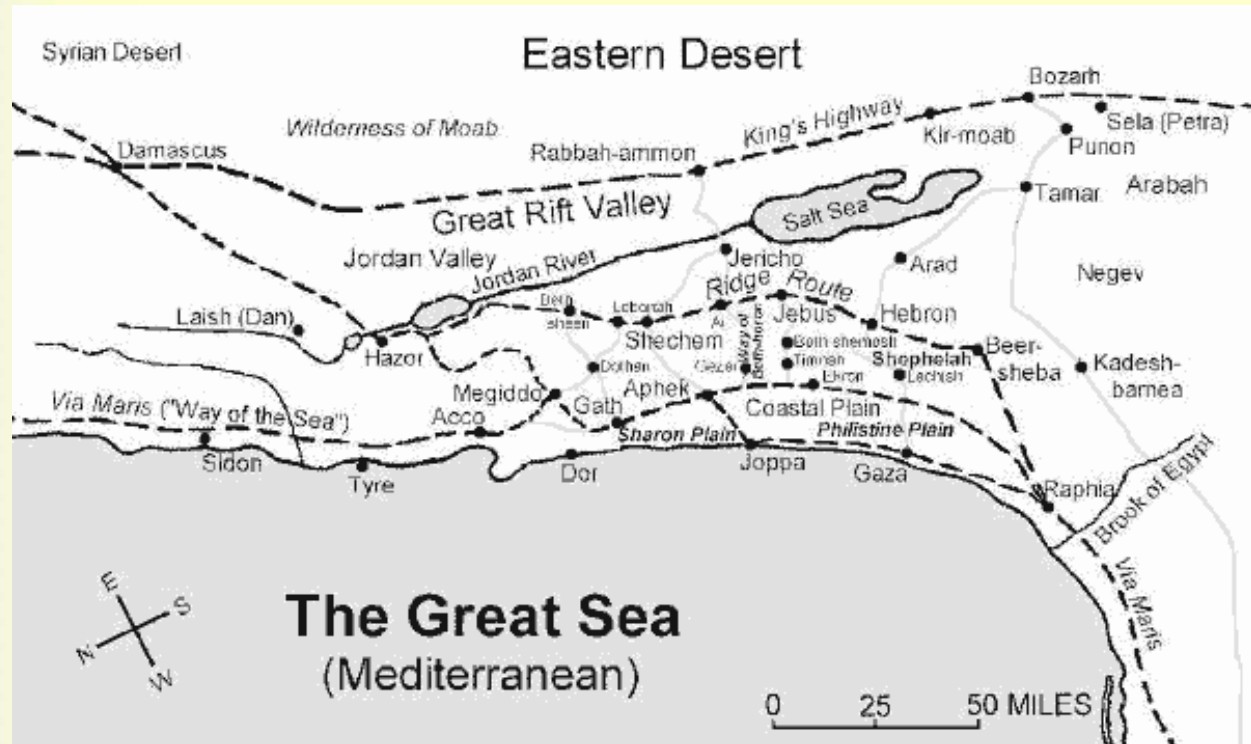
One of the most important trade routes in the Middle East during ancient times was the Via Maris. The Latin term, meaning "Way of the Sea" is referenced in [Isaiah 8:23](#) in the [Tanakh](#) (in the Christian Old Testament it is Isaiah 9:1) as "Derech HaYam" or "Way of the Sea." The Latin name comes from the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the [New Testament](#), in [Matthew 4:15](#). The term "Via Maris" comes from the [Romans](#) and hence the terminology "Via Maris" tends to be an exclusively Christian reference to the Sea Road. Other names for the Derech HaYam/ Via Maris include "Coastal Road" and "Way of the Philistines." From the coast to Damascus, the route is called the Trunk Road. The Via Maris travels and is also known as the International Coastal Highway. The International Coastal Highway is still a major route in modern-day Israel.



The "Way of the Sea" is one of three major trade routes in ancient [Israel](#) – the Via Maris, Ridge Route, and the King's Highway. It is situated from the Galilee to the North to Samaria to the South, running through the [Jezreel Valley](#). At the Philistine Plain, the Way broke into two branches, one on the coast and one inland (through the Jezreel Valley, the [Sea of Galilee](#), and Dan), which unites at [Megiddo](#) ("Armageddon"). The location of Megiddo vis a vis the Via Maris explains why Megiddo was a very important route for travel and trading city in ancient Israel. The Way of the Sea connected the major

routes from the Fertile Crescent to Mesopotamia (from Egypt to modern day Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria). The road was the main thoroughfare running north/south from the Sinai along the coastal plain through the Jezreel valley, [Beit Shean](#) and on until Damascus

Throughout the centuries, once the Jews were exiled from Israel, the Jezreel Valley, in which the route traverses, became abandoned and the area became an infested swamp. [Zionist](#) pioneers, however, drained the swamp from the time of the first land acquisition in 1921, and the valley has been transformed into a fertile, fruit-bearing plain.



Source: [Way of the Sea](#), [WZO](#), [Wikipedia](#), [BibArch](#)

Maps Courtesy of [BibArch](#) and the [WZO](#)

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## Weights, Measures, and Coins

### From the Bible Through the Talmudic Period

#### Weights in the Bible

Seven weights related to metal (thus creating "coins") are mentioned in the [Bible](#): talent, mina, shekel, beka, gerah, pim, and kesitah. A scale of the relationships between the first five weights mentioned can be established on the basis of the [Bible](#) and other sources; the absolute and relative value of the pim can be determined from archaeological finds. The seventh weight, the kesitah ([Genesis 33:19](#); [Joshua 24:32](#); [Job 42:11](#)), seems to be an archaic weight and the origin of its name and its metrological value are not known.

We can figure out the interrelationships of the three most important weights, the talent, shekel, and gerah.

The talent (kikkar), was the largest unit of weight in the Bible, and was already known by the same name in Ugaritic. In Ugaritic it was pronounced kakaru, as has been shown from Akkadian documents from Ugarit and Alalakh. The relation between the talent and the shekel is defined in [Exodus 38:25–26](#). The half shekel brought by 603,550 men amounted to 100 talents and 1,775 shekels. Thus a talent was 3,000 shekels. This system of dividing the talent into 3,000 shekels differed from the Mesopotamian system which divides the talent into 3,600 parts, and was the same as the Ugaritic system where the talent was also divided into 3,000 shekels. From this it follows that the biblical division is based upon an ancient [Canaanite](#) tradition.

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The major weight of metal mentioned in the Bible is the shekel, as its name, which means simply "weight," testifies. Since the shekel was the definite weight, an expression such as "1,000 silver" ([Genesis 20:16](#)) can be explained as 1,000 shekels of silver, and the name of the weight is omitted since it is self-explanatory. Abbreviations like these are also found in other Semitic languages. The fundamental nature of the shekel can also be seen in the fact that all weights which the Bible explains are explained only in terms of the shekel.

The shekel was used as a bartering material, not a minted coin. Jeremiah bought a plot of land and weighed his payment (silver) on scales ([Jeremiah 32:9](#)).

Subdivisions of the shekel were the beka or half-shekel ([Genesis 24:22](#); [Exodus 38:26](#)) and the gerah, a 20th of the shekel ([Exodus 30:13](#)). The gerah is known in Akkadian as gir-. The basic meaning of the Akkadian word is a grain of carob seed.

The shekel, in turn, was a 50th part of the maneh, and the maneh was a 60th part of the talent. The talent was, of course, equal to 3,000 shekels. The maneh and the talent, however, were only units of account and remained so during the Second [Temple](#) period when the shekel became a coin denomination. Scales and weights of the shekel unit have been found in excavations as have gold, silver, and bronze ingots.

### **A Simple Table:**

1 talent=60 maneh=3,000 shekels

1 maneh=50 shekels=100 beka=1,000 gerahs

In short, all weights fit together nicely....if we only knew how much a shekel weighed...

In excavations carried out in [Palestine](#) some of the weights which have been found have their weight marked on them, but most are without any notation. The shape of the weights, for the most part, is semicircular (dome-shaped). There are also some cast metal weights that are rectangular and cube-shaped, and some that are oval or in the shape of animals. Most of the weights found in [Palestine](#) are from the end of the period of the monarchy (the seventh to sixth centuries BCE).

Very few weights and inscriptions with the word shekel written explicitly have been found in strata from the Israelite period. A bronze weight in the shape of a turtle was found in the coastal plain; on its reverse side it bears the inscription "one-quarter shekel." And in fact, a weight of this sort (one-quarter shekel) is mentioned in I Samuel 9:8. That quarter shekel weighed 2.63 grams. That would make the shekel 10.52 grams.

Another bronze weight from Samaria, also in the shape of a turtle, bears the inscription "five", and this has been interpreted to mean five gerahs. Since there are twenty gerahs in a shekel, that would make that weight one-quarter of a shekel as well. Its weight is 2.49 grams, making a shekel 9.56 grams.

Another weight from Samaria is marked on one side "one-quarter shekel," and its weight is 2.54 grams. That would make the shekel 10.16 grams.

In establishing the value of the shekel there is an additional complication in that the Bible mentions at least three kinds of shekels: in Genesis 23:16, a shekel of silver "at the going merchant's rate [over la-socher]; in [Exodus 30:13](#), "shekel by the sanctuary weight [ha-kodesh]"; and in [II Samuel 14:26](#), "shekels by the king's stone [b'even ha-melech]," that is, shekels stamped by the royal treasury as proof that they are perfect. It cannot be determined whether these shekels were equivalent in value, but on the basis of evidence from external sources, it appears that there were differences between them.

The mina (Hebrew: Maneh) which designates a weight of approximately 50 shekels, is found in the Bible primarily in the late books ([Ezekiel 45:12](#); [Ezra 2:69](#); [Nehemiah 7:70, 71](#)). In the period preceding the destruction of the [First Temple](#), the mina is mentioned only once, in the verse about [Solomon's](#) shields ([I Kings 10:17](#)). From this it is reasonable to assume that in ancient times in Israel reckoning was done in shekels and talents only, and the mina was not used except in unusual situations. It appears that this practice too had its roots in an ancient Canaanite tradition, for in Ugaritic writings many calculations are found involving shekels and talents and very few involving the mina. The value of the mina is defined in [Ezekiel 45:12](#). From this verse it follows that the mina is equivalent to 60 shekels like the Akkadian man—.

The beka is mentioned twice in the Bible ([Gen. 24:22](#); [Ex. 38:26](#)) and its value is explicitly determined as one-half a shekel. Its name is derived

from the root bq, "to break, to divide," and its basic meaning is "a part."

In addition to being divided into the beka and gerah, the shekel was also divided into a fourth and a third ([I Sam. 9:8](#); [Neh. 10:33](#)). There is support for this division both inside and outside Palestine. From Assyrian documents found at Calah it is evident that the shekel was very often divided there into many more subunits, but there is no proof that this was so in Israel as well.

Also mentioned in the Bible is the peres ([Dan. 5:25, 28](#)). The peres is also mentioned in the [Mishnah](#) (Pe'ah 8:5) and its value there is half a zuz.

## Coins In the Talmud

The currency system most commonly found in Talmudic literature was based on the Roman monetary system both in terminology and metrological structure. Its standard was linked to that of the Tyrian tetradrachm (sela).

There were 1,500 sela'im in a talent.

The now-famous shekel, one-half sela, was no longer the main coin of measurement even though 3,000 of them still made a talent.

The smallest known coin was the perutah. There were four perutot in a dinar (also called a "zuz").

Although our sages disagreed about the value of certain small coins, the Talmudic monetary system appears to have been as follows:

1 talent=60 mina=120 tartimar=750 uncia=1,500 sela=3,000 shekel==  
either 4,000 or 3,000 Italian issar=6,000 zuz (also called dinar) = 12,000  
PROVINCIAL sela=24,000 perutah

Coins in daily use were denarii (or zuz) and sela'im from imperial mints, while "small change" copper coinage was minted locally in a number of cities, and were considered to be equal to 1/8 the imperial coins.

In Babylonia during the Sassanid period (from the early third century onward), the standard silver unit was the Sassanid drachm, called in the Talmud zuz (from Akkadian zuzu—"to cut"), while smaller copper coins

of varying sizes were called peshitte.

## **The History of Coins: How We Got From Shekels to Sela'im**

Under [Persian](#) rule, some forms of Judean coins were minted, imitations of Athenian coinage. These silver coins are rather rare, but at least six coin types are known with the inscription Yehud (Aramaic: Judea). Some follow the "head/owl" type, while others show a falcon, a fleur-de-lis, a Janus head, a god seated on a winged chariot, and a bird of an unidentified kind. It cannot be determined whether the Jewish high priest or the local Persian governor was the issuing authority, but it's clear that the community of Judea at that time had no problems placing images on coins. In fact, one of the coins contains the Hebrew name Hezekiah (Yehezkiyyah).

With the rise of [Alexander the Great](#), the coins of the [Greek](#) world were briefly universalized. With the mounting tension between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, each Greek nation created its own coins.

Beginning in 137 BCE, the [Hasmoneans](#) minted their own coins, mostly the small bronze perutah or dilepton. In accordance with the Second Commandment no likeness of living beings, men or animals, are found on them. Most of the emblems, for example the cornucopia—single or double—the wreath surrounding the legend, the anchor, the flower, the star, and the helmet, were copied from emblems found on the late issues of the Seleucid coinage. All Hasmonean coins bear Hebrew legends, but those of Alexander Yannai and Mattathias Antigonus also have legends in Greek.

The Hebrew legend, written in the old Hebrew script, almost always appeared in the formula, "X, the high priest and the assembly of the elders of the state of the Jews." The Hasmonean rulers were thus styled on most coins as high priests. The only exception is Alexander Yannai who eventually also styled himself king on some of his Hebrew legends. On the Greek legends the Hasmonean rulers styled themselves throughout as "king."

With one exception, all Hasmonean coins were undated, which presents scholars with difficulties in arranging them chronologically, especially as different rulers went by the same names. In spite of earlier opinions, Simeon, the first independent Hasmonean ruler (142–135 BCE), never issued any coins. According to I Maccabees 15:2–9, Antiochus VII



granted Simeon the right to issue coinage, but it has been proved that this grant was withdrawn before Simeon could make use of it. It has been suggested that Simeon's son [John Hyrcanus I](#) (135–104 BCE) did not start issuing coins immediately on succeeding his father, but only considerably later, probably in 110 BCE. This suggestion is based on the fact that cities in Phoenicia and in Palestine received the right to coin their own money from the declining Seleucid kingdom: Tyre in 126 BCE., Sidon in 110 BCE, and Ashkelon in 104 BCE.

John Hyrcanus' coins were the main pattern for the whole series of Hasmonean coins. One side depicted a wreath surrounding the legend, "Johanan [Yehohanan] the high priest and the assembly of the elders of the state of the Jews," while the reverse side showed a double cornucopia with a pomegranate. All his coins were of the perutah denomination. The coins of his successor, Aristobulus I (104–103 BCE), were in brass with the same denomination and type, but the name was replaced by Judah (Yehudah).

At the beginning of his reign Alexander Yannai (103–76 BCE) issued coins of the same type as his predecessors, changing the name to Jonathan (Yehonatan). Later, he issued another series of coins (in Hebrew and Greek) on which he styled himself king. Their emblems were star, anchor, both sometimes surrounded by a circle, and flower. A lepton or half-perutah with a palm branch, and a flower also belonged to this "king" series. One type of this series, the star/anchor surrounded by a circle, was very frequent. This was the only coin type in the whole series of Jewish coins which bears an Aramaic legend written in square Hebrew letters and which has been dated. The Hebrew as well as the Greek date 25, which is the 25th year of reign of Alexander Yannai (78 BCE), were recently discerned. As in the Greek legends and this Aramaic one as well, his name is given as "Alexandros." Alexander Yannai also apparently issued lead coins which belong to his "king" series. It is believed that in his final issues he reverted to the early Hasmonean coin type, styling himself again as high priest but altering his Hebrew name from Yehonatan to Yonatan probably in order to avoid the formula of the Tetragrammaton.

The bulk of the coins of John Hyrcanus II (67, 63–40 BCE) were in the same shape as those of John Hyrcanus I. There were, however, varieties which were peculiar to his issues. Greek letters, single or as monograms, eventually appeared on his coins. These letters probably referred to the magistrates who were responsible for the mint.

Besides the regular coin type, Hyrcanus II also issued leptas or half perutot of the same type as did his father Alexander Yannai, bearing the palm-branch/flower. One larger trilepton shows a helmet and a double cornucopia. On all his coins he styled himself high priest.

During the short reign of the last Hasmonean ruler, Antigonus Mattathias (40–37 BCE), a fundamental change occurred in the coin issue of the Hasmoneans. His Hebrew name Mattityahu (Mattathias) is only given on his perutah denomination. The pomegranate between the double cornucopia is replaced by an ear of barley. He issued two larger denominations which can be compared with the Seleucid chalcous and dichalcous. Antigonus was the only Jewish ruler who depicted the holy vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem on his coins, specifically, the table of shewbread and the seven-branched lampstand. In his Hebrew legends he styled himself "high priest" and in his Greek legends "king." His Hebrew name is known to us only from his coins.

The coins of [Herod the Great](#) (37–4 BCE), all of bronze as those of his successors, can be divided into two groups: those which are dated and those which are not. The dated coins all bear the same date, the year three. As Herod no doubt reckoned his reign from his appointment as king of Judea by the [Romans](#) in 40 BCE and not from his actual accession three years later, the "year three" is equal to 37 BCE. All legends on his coins were in Greek and no Hebrew legends appear on the coins of the Herodian dynasty. The legends rendered his name and title. The emblems on his coins were the tripod, thymiaterion, caduceus, pomegranate, shield, helmet, aphlaston, palm branch, anchor, double and single cornucopia, eagle, and galley. It may be concluded from this selection of symbols that Herod the Great did not wish to offend the religious feelings of his subjects. The denominations of his coins were the chalcous and hemi-chalcous, the trilepton, and frequently the dilepton or perutah.

The coins of Herod Archelaus (4 BCE–6 CE) are undated and bear mainly maritime emblems, such as the galley, prow, and anchor. Other types are the double cornucopia, the helmet, bunch of grapes, and wreath surrounding the legend. His main denomination was the perutah, but he also issued a trilepton.

Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee 4 BCE–39 CE) began to issue coins only after he founded and settled his new capital Tiberias. All his coins are dated. The earliest date is from the 24th year of his reign (19/20 CE). On his coins he is called Herod, but they can easily be distinguished as



they bear his title "tetrarch." The emblems on his coins are all of flora such as the reed, the palm branch, a bunch of dates, and a palm tree. Though the emblems are the same on all denominations, three denominations can be distinguished. One side showed a wreath that surrounded the legend "Tiberias"; only the series of the last year referred to Gaius Caligula.

As the territory of the tetrarch Herod Philip I (4 BCE.–34 CE) was predominantly non-Jewish, he allowed himself to strike coins with a representation of the ruling Roman emperor and the pagan temple erected by his father in his capital Panias. His coins were dated from the year 5 to the year 37 of his reign, though not all dates occur.

The most common coin struck by King Herod Agrippa I (37–44 CE), grandson of Herod the Great, was a perutah of the year 6 of his reign (42/3 CE), depicting an umbrella-shaped royal canopy and three ears of barley. This coin was obviously struck for Judea. For the other districts of his kingdom he issued coins that would have offended Jewish religious feelings as they carried his own portrait or that of the Roman emperor and even gods or human beings in the Greco-Roman style of the period. On one very rare coin two clasped hands are shown; the legend seems to refer to an alliance between the Jewish people and the Roman senate.

All Agrippa's coins are dated, and in his non-Jewish series two different groups of two denominations each can be discerned belonging to the reigns of Caligula and Claudius respectively.

Herod of Chalcis (41–48 CE), brother of Agrippa I, regularly put his portrait on his coins, calling himself "friend of the emperor." Some of his extremely rare coins bear the date "year 3," others are undated; a system of three denominations can be observed in this coinage too.

From the time of the son of Herod of Chalcis, Aristobulus of Chalcis (57–92 CE), only a few rare specimens have been preserved. They bear his portrait and sometimes also that of his wife Salome. His coins can be identified by their legends which mention him and his wife Salome as king and queen.

Because of his long reign, the series of coins assigned to Herod Agrippa II (c. 50–93 CE) is the largest and most varied among the coin series of the Herodians. Two types bear his likeness, and others issued in the year 5 of Agrippa with the name of Nero have a legend surrounded by a wreath.

There are two coins which have a double date (the years 6 and 11) and which belong to the two different eras used on his coins. These double dated coins bear "inoffensive" symbols such as double cornucopias and a hand grasping various fruits. All his coins, like those of his father Agrippa I, were of bronze and dated, making it easy to arrange them in chronological order.

There are however some difficulties. The first is the parallel issue of coins in the name of Vespasian and in the name of his sons Titus and Domitian. It has been accepted that all his Greek coins belonged to an era starting in the year 56 CE. The Latin series issued in the name of Domitian belongs to an era starting in 61 CE. The bulk of his coins were struck during the reign of the Flavian emperors, with Tyche, the goddess of destiny, and the goddess of victory as emblems. A unique specimen, with the victory inscription on a shield hanging on a palm-tree, refers to the Roman victory in the Jewish War (66–70 C.E.). Agrippa thus put himself into the Roman camp against his own people. His coinage, as described above, shows the most far-reaching deviation from Jewish tradition among the ancient coinage issued by Jewish rulers.

By the time the Jewish War broke out, the Tyrian mint had ceased to issue silver shekels, but shekels were needed by every Jewish adult male for the payment of the annual Temple tax of a half-shekel ([Exodus 30:11ff.](#); [II Kings 12:5ff.](#)). This reason and the resolve of the Jewish authorities to demonstrate their sovereignty over their own country led to the decision to strike the well-known "thick" shekels and half- and quarter-shekels dated from the first to the fifth year of the era of the war. These are the first silver coins Jews struck in antiquity. They are of an extraordinarily good quality, artistically as well as technically. The emblems are as simple as they are beautiful: a chalice with pearl rim and three pomegranates. The legends which are, of course, only in Hebrew and written in the old Hebrew script, read Yerushalayim ha-Kedoshah ("Jerusalem the Holy") and Shekel Yisrael ("Shekel of Israel") with the abbreviated dates: shin alef, shin bet for sh[enat], a[lef], "year one," sh[enat] b[et], "year two," etc.). Small bronze coins of the perutah denomination were struck during the second and third year of the war, and three larger denominations were issued during the fourth year, two of which indicate the denomination as rev'i'a ("quarter") and chatzi ("half"). The emblems of the bronze coins were the vine leaf, the amphora, the lulav, the etrog, the palm tree, the fruit baskets, and the chalice.

During the [Bar Kochba War](#) (133-135 CE) the last Jewish coin series in

antiquity was issued. Bar Kochba became the head of the Jewish community, and the bulk of the coins issued bear the name Simeon and eventually his title "prince of Israel." However, other coins exist from that period which bear the name of "Eleazar the Priest" or simply that of "Jerusalem" as the minting authority. The coins were issued over a period of a little more than three years. The coins of the first two years were dated, but the formula of the era changed from "Year one of the redemption of Israel" to "Year two of the freedom of Israel." During the third year and until the end of the war, the coins issued were undated and bore the war slogan "For the freedom of Jerusalem." These coin types, too, were as numerous as they were beautiful, and artistically ranked first in the series of Jewish coins. The coins were issued in silver and in bronze. The entire issue was overstruck on coins then current in Palestine, such as on the Roman provincial tetradrachms (mainly from Antiochia) and on the Roman denarii or provincial drachma, as well as on local bronze city coins mainly from [Ashkelon](#) and Gaza. Bar Kochba possibly obtained the gentile coins needed for overstriking by means of a public loan for the national war effort.

There were two silver denominations, the tetradrachm or sela and the denarius or zuz. The Temple front and a lulav and etrog appeared on the tetradrachms, while a rather large number of emblems occurred on the denarii, such as a wreath surrounding the legend, a bunch of grapes, a juglet, a lyre, a kitara, a pair of trumpets, and a palm branch. These emblems were used in many die combinations, thereby creating a large number of coin types. The bronze coinage was divided into four denominations, a system taken over from the city coinage then current in Palestine and which was reused for the Bar Kochba issues.

In general, the Bar Kochba coinage was based on the tradition of the coinage of the Jewish War, 66–70. The amphora, vine leaf, and palm tree occurred on the coins of that period, and the similarity of the legends is all the more striking, with the name of Zion replaced by the name Israel during the Bar Kochba War.

The vast majority of coins used during the Roman period were minted by the Romans themselves. After the banishment of Herod Archelaus in 6 C. E., his territory (Judea and Samaria) came under direct Roman rule administered by a procurator of equestrian rank. Some of these procurators issued coins of the perutah denomination as follows: coin types with a palm tree and an ear of barley; coin types with a wreath surrounding legend, a double cornucopia, olive spray, three lilies, a vine leaf or leaves, kantaros, amphora, and a palm branch; coin types with

three ears of barley, simpulum, lituus, and a wreath surrounding the date of issue; and coin types with a wreath surrounding legend, two crossed spears, a palm tree, and a palm branch. It is believed that these coins were issued at Caesarea Maritima, the administrative center of the Romans in Palestine. All coins bore the regal years of the respective Roman emperors and can therefore be arranged in chronological order without difficulty.

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., Palestine became a separate administrative unit called provincia Judaea. The Flavian emperors appointed a legatus pro praetore as head of the local administration, and he was also the commander of the military forces stationed in the province.

During the reigns of Vespasian (69–79 C.E.) and Titus (79–81 C.E.) the coins issued refer in their types and legends to the Roman victory; the legends are the Greek equivalent to the well-known legend Judaea Capta. Under Domitian (81–96 C.E.) four series of coins were issued, which do not refer to the victory over the Jews, but to Domitian's victories in Germany and Britain. All but the last two coin types of Domitian are undated and their chronological order was conjectural until recently.

Individual Roman-held cities also minted their own coins. City coins issued under Roman rule customarily had the head of the emperor on one side while the reverse bore images referring to the city, such as temples built there, the gods worshiped by their inhabitants, and military garrisons stationed in them. The legends frequently indicated the status of the city within the Roman empire, such as colonia, autonomous, etc. The archaeological finds suggest that the circulation of these coins was not restricted to the city by which they were issued, but was countrywide.

In some cases ([Ashkelon](#), Gaza, Neapolis, [Sepphoris](#), and [Tiberias](#)) the money systems consisted of three or more denominations. Their equivalency with the Roman coin system cannot be ascertained. All these coins were of bronze. The only city in Palestine that issued an autonomous silver coinage was Ashkelon (between 51 and 30 BCE)—coins bearing portraits of Ptolemy XIV, Ptolemy XV, and Cleopatra VII. The city coinage came to an end in about 260 C.E. when it became known that the value of the metal was greater than their nominal value. It was then replaced by debased Roman imperial coins.

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## Who Were the Hebrews?

By Gerald A. Larue

According to biblical tradition, the Hebrews are peoples descended from Shem, one of Noah's sons, through Eber, the eponymous ancestor, and Abraham. Gen. 7:22 f., reports that the flood destroyed all life except that in Noah's ark; consequently, the whole human family descended from Noah and his sons: Japheth, Ham and Shem. As yet, not all of the names of eponymous ancestors in the family lines can be identified,<sup>1</sup> but some probabilities are listed in Chart 6.

From Shem, through Arpachshad and Shelah came Eber, the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, and from his descendants through Peleg, Reu, Sereg and Nahor came Terah, the father of Abram and his brothers Nahor and Haran. It becomes clear that if "Hebrews" are descendants of Eber, then others besides those of Abraham's line would be included (see Gen. 10:25-27).

### Read Gen. 12-25

With Abraham the story of the Hebrews begins, and it is clearly stated that Hebrew origins lay outside Canaan. The summons to leave his ancestral home and journey to Canaan is accompanied by a promise (Gen. 12:2) that becomes a submotif in patriarchal accounts, re-appearing again and again (cf. Gen. 13:14 f., 15:5 f., 18:10, 22:17, 26:24, 28:13 f., 32:12 f., 35:9 ff., 48:16), finally taking covenantal form (Gen. 17:14 ff.). The promise has two parts: nationhood and divine blessing or protection. The precise location of the nation-to-be is not specified but was, of course, known to those hearing or reading the account. The promise of blessing signified the unique and particularistic bond between Yahweh and his followers, so that the enemies of Abraham or the nation were enemies of Yahweh, and those befriending Abraham and/or the nation would be blessed. With this assurance, Abraham journeyed to Canaan, Egypt, the Negeb, Hebron, Gezer, Beer-sheba and back to Hebron where he and his wife Sarah died.

The descriptions of Abraham are not uniform: at times he appears as a lonely migrant, at others as a chieftain, head of a large family, or as a warrior. Factual details about the patriarch are difficult to establish, for his real significance lies in what is often called "inner history," through which those who looked to Abraham as a forefather gained understanding of themselves as "people of the promise" and attained, a sense of destiny and an appreciation of their particular relationship to their deity. We have noted earlier that some Abrahamic traditions coincide with information coming from Nuzi, which would place Abraham in the Middle Bronze era.



-Elam (Elamites)  
 -Asshur (Assyrians)  
 -Arpachshad (A Chaldean location?)  
 -Lud (Lydians)  
 -Aram (Arameans)  
 -Uz (A city in the Syrian desert)  
 -Hul (An Aramean tribe or village?)  
 -Gether (An Aramean tribe or village?)  
 -Mash (An Aramean location or tribe or village?)  
 -Soba (In northern Africa, bordering the Red Sea)  
 -Flaviiah (A city in Arabia?)  
 -Sobtah (A city in Arabia?)  
 -Raamah (A city in Arabia?)  
 -Subter (in Arabia?)  
 -Gomer (Gomerians of the sixth century B.C.)  
 -Elishak (A colony on Cyprus? South Italy? North Africa?)  
 -Tarshish (A colony of Eastern Mediterranean people in Spain?)  
 -Kizim (Cyprits?)  
 -Dodanim (A Mediterranean people? Rhodians?)  
 -Magog (Scythians?)  
 -Madai (Medes)  
 -Javan (Ionian Greeks?)  
 -Tubal (A people in Asia Minor?)  
 -Meshech (A people of the upper Euphrates called Mushki in Assyrian texts?)  
 -Tiras (An Aegean people?)

The stories about Jacob also accord with Nuzi (Hurrian) law for it is recorded that a man may labor for his wife.<sup>7</sup> In dealing with his uncle Laban, Jacob's trickery was matched by his uncle's deceptive acts. There is no condemnation of chicanery but, rather, the attitude that to best a man in a business contract revealed cleverness. When Jacob's hopes to inherit his uncle's estate were dashed by the birth of male heirs, he broke contract and fled, and it was only when a new contract was made that relationships were healed. The account of Jacob's night wrestling with an angelic visitor has probably come down to us through various recensions, for it now contains two aetiological explanations: one concerning the name "Jacob-Israel" and the other giving the reason why the ischiatic sinew is not eaten by Hebrews. Other traditions associate Jacob with Bethel and Shechem.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold into slavery by jealous brothers and rose to high office in Egypt. When his father and brothers migrated to Egypt to escape famine, they were regally received and encouraged to settle. Documents attesting to the custom of admitting nomadic groups into the country in time of famine are known from Egypt, and the Joseph stories reflect many accurate details about Egyptian life and may be derived in part from Egyptian tales, as we shall see. The pharaoh under whom Joseph rose to power is not identified.

It is quite possible, as A. Alt has argued, that the patriarchs were founders of separate cults or clans in which distinctive names for the deity were compounded with patriarchal names.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the deity was known as "the Shield of Abraham" (Gen. 15:1), "the Fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42, 53), and "the Mighty One of Jacob" (Gen. 49:24). Individual representations were later fused and equated with Yahweh, and individual clan heroes were placed in an historical sequence and made part of a single family line from Abraham to Jacob (Israel).

### **Read Exod. 1-6**

After what appears to be an extended period of time, the Hebrews increased in numbers and became a mighty multitude, and a pharaoh who was indifferent to the Joseph traditions inherited the throne and persecuted the Hebrews, pressing them into virtual enslavement. Moses, a desert refugee from Egyptian justice, became associated with the Kenite people. On the slopes of Mount Sinai in a dramatic encounter with Yahweh, he was commissioned to act as deliverer of the Hebrews. In the clash with Pharaoh, the god-king's power was overshadowed by Yahweh through a series of horrendous events in which the Nile was turned to blood and plagues involving frogs, gnats, flies, cattle, boils, hail, locusts and darkness are ultimately climaxed by the death of all the first-born children of Egypt (**Read Exod. 7-11**). This final act, associated in tradition with the Passover festival, persuaded Pharaoh to release the Hebrews. Shortly after the Hebrews departed, Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued them. At the Sea of Reeds, Yahweh permitted the Hebrews to pass through the waters unscathed but overwhelmed the Egyptians. The Hebrews pressed into the wilderness to Mount Sinai where the law was given and there they entered a covenant with Yahweh (**Read Num. 14:39f.**). After an abortive attempt to seize Canaan by penetrating from the south, they moved eastward and, after many setbacks, took up a position on the eastern side of the Jordan, just north of the Salt Sea. Here Moses died, and under his successor, Joshua, the attacks on Canaan were launched.

### **PROBLEMS WITH DATES AND PLACES**

Efforts to date the patriarchal period have not been particularly rewarding, for biblical chronology is complex. In the P source, 215 years pass between the time of Abraham's journey to Canaan and Jacob's migration to Egypt (see Gen. 12:4b, 21:5, 25:26, 47:9), and the period spent in Egypt is given as 430 years (Exod. 12:40 f.), making a total of 645 years before the Exodus. As we shall see, most scholars date the Exodus near the middle of the thirteenth century, so that Abraham would leave Mesopotamia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and Jacob's

journey to Egypt would occur about 1700 B.C. Unfortunately, date variations occur in some manuscripts. In the LXX, Exod. 12:40 includes time spent in both Egypt and Canaan in the 430-year period (some manuscripts read 435 years). According to this reckoning, Abraham's journey would fall in the seventeenth century and Jacob's in the fifteenth century.

The early nineteenth century date for Abraham places his departure from Mesopotamia at the time of the Elamite and Amorite invasion. It harmonizes with the conclusions of Nelson Glueck, who found that between the twenty-first and nineteenth centuries B.C. the Negeb was dotted with hamlets where inhabitants, having learned how to hoard water, engaged in agriculture and tended small flocks. Such settlements would provide stopping places for Abraham and his retinue.<sup>9</sup> The seventeenth century date for Jacob's settlement in Egypt coincides with the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, lending support to Josephus' hypothesis, for Hebrews may have been part of this movement.

The second pattern of dating would place Abraham in the time of Hammurabi of Babylon and would give strength to the argument that the mention of King Amraphel of Shinar in Gen. 14:1 is a Hebraized reference to Hammurabi. Abraham would, therefore, be in Canaan during the Hyksos period, and Joseph would have risen to power in the Amarna age. The close of the Amarna period brought to power leaders hostile to Akhenaton and possibly also to those he had favored.

Whatever the correct date for Abraham may be, he represents the beginning of the nation to the Hebrews. Yahweh's promise to the patriarch and his successors is considered to be the guarantee of national existence (Num. 32:11). There are no references to Abraham in the writings of the eighth century prophets, for then stress was laid on the Exodus as the starting point of the nation. In the seventh and sixth centuries, and in the post-Exilic period, the Abrahamic tradition came to the fore once again.

Efforts to determine the date and route of the Exodus have been disappointing. Josephus placed the Exodus at the time of the overthrow of the Hyksos by Ahmose in the sixteenth century, a date that is far too early. Biblical evidence is limited. I Kings 6:1 reports that Solomon began building the temple in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus. Solomon's rule is believed to have begun near the middle of the tenth century, possibly about 960 B.C. Thus, the date of the Exodus would be: 960 minus 4 (4th year of reign) plus 480, or 1436. In that case, Thutmose III would be the pharaoh of the oppression, and his mother, Hatshepsut, might be identified as the rescuer of the infant Moses. The Hebrew invasion of Canaan, taking place forty years later or about 1400 B.C., might be identified with the coming of the 'apiru.<sup>10</sup>

Another theory is based on the reference to the building of Pithom and Raamses in Exod. 1:11. It was noted earlier that both Seti I and Rameses II worked at the rebuilding of these cities, and that Rameses is the best candidate for the Pharaoh of the Exodus (1290-1224 B.C.). If the Exodus took place between 1265 and 1255, the invasion of Canaan would occur in Merneptah's reign, and some encounter between Egyptians and Hebrews would be the basis for his boast of annihilating Israel.

Attempts to chart the course followed by the fleeing Hebrews is equally frustrating. No one knows for sure the location of Mount Sinai, and the site chosen for the holy mountain determines, in part, the route suggested. Attempts have been made to identify stopping places mentioned in Num. 33:1-37,<sup>11</sup> but the identifications can be no more than conjectures, for biblical descriptions are vague without distinctive landmarks.<sup>12</sup>

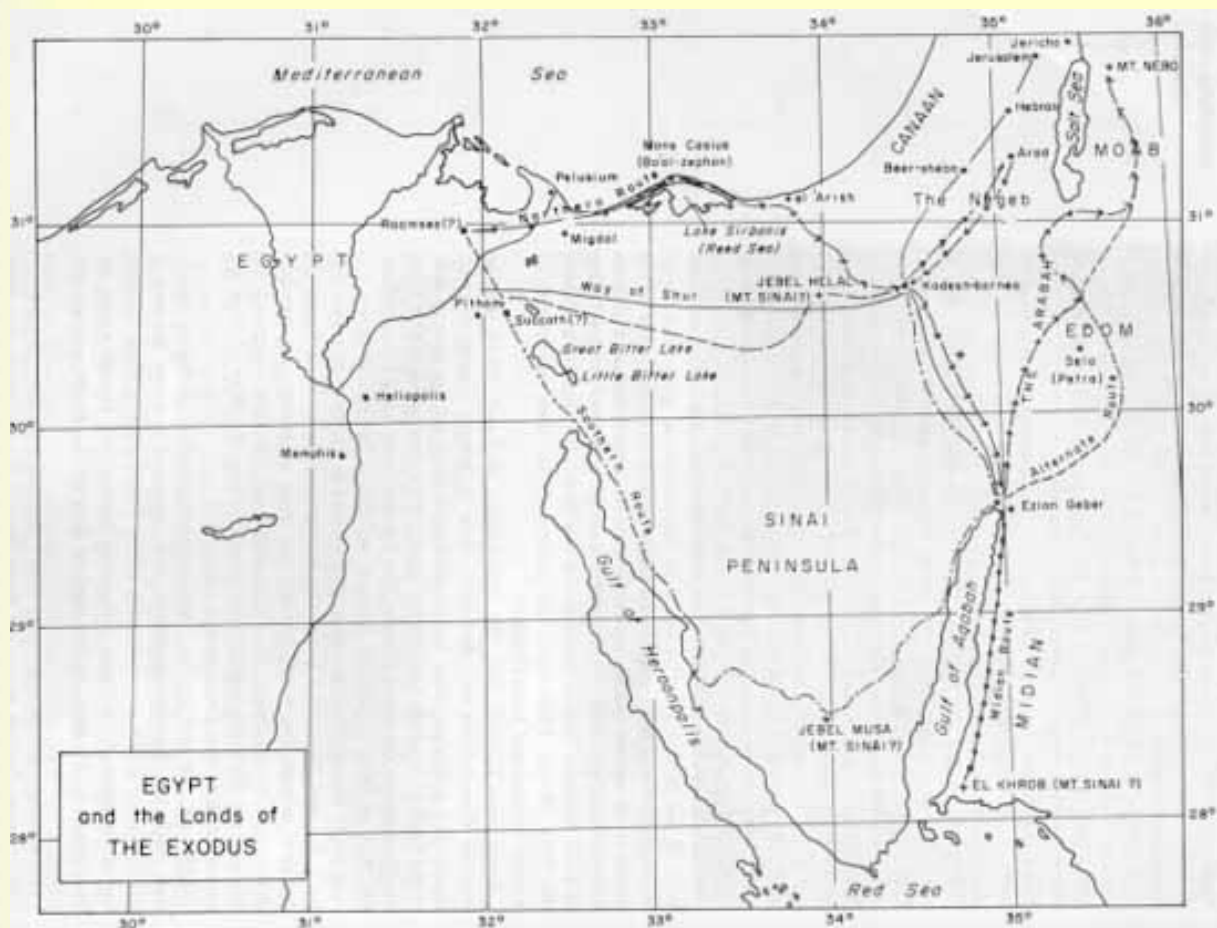
The traditional site of Sinai, Jebel Musa, near the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula, has been widely accepted since the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., although there was some confusion over which mountain in the cluster of peaks was Sinai. The traditional route to Jebel Musa begins in Egypt, crosses the Sea of Reeds (identified either at the tip of the Red Sea in the Gulf of Heroonpolis [Gulf of Suez] or as one of the papyrus swamps above the gulf), and goes southward along the western edge of the Sinai peninsula before turning inland to Jebel Musa. From Sinai, the Hebrews would move to the north along the Gulf of Aqabah toward Ezion Geber and Kadesti Barnea.

Sinai has also been identified as Jebel Helal, located in the northern part of the peninsula. The route to this mountain goes from Egypt across the marshy swamp area and follows the Way of Shur, one of the major trade routes of the ancient world, to Jebel Helal and Kadesh Barnea. Another route to this same mountain goes over the land strip of Lake Sirbonis (which becomes the Sea of Reeds), northward along the Way of the Philistines, the coastal route, then southward to Kadesh Barnea and Jebel Helal.

Some have insisted that the descriptions in Exod. 19:16 suggest volcanic disturbances and that Sinai must be sought among volcanic mountains, probably those in the Midianite areas on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqabah. One choice among these mountains is El Khrob which preserves the name Horeb. The Exodus route would then follow the Way of Shur to Kadesh Barnea and Ezion Geber and down the coast to El Khrob. Sinai has also been located in Edomite territory, for Judg. 5:4 and Deut. 33:2 locate the mountain in Seir. Jebel Faran on the west side of the Wadi Arabah has been suggested as a possible choice, and mountains in the Petra area have also been suggested. In this case the Hebrews would have traveled along the Way of Shur, by way of Ezion Geber, into Edomite territory.<sup>13</sup>

Although, for the scholar, there are innumerable problems associated with the Exodus tradition, this memorable event became a central factor in the interpretation of the Hebrew faith. Here Yahweh had demonstrated his loyal, redeeming love to the people whom he had chosen as his own. In the darkest days of the Exilic period, the memory of the Exodus event became a source of hope, for it was believed that Yahweh would deliver his people from bondage in Babylon even as he had rescued them from Egypt.





A somewhat different tradition of Hebrew beginnings is reflected in Ezek. (16:3 ff.), where mixed ancestry — Amorite, Hittite and Canaanite — is attributed to the Jerusalemites. But here we have a unique situation, for Jerusalem was a Jebusite stronghold which did not become a Hebrew city until the time of David (II Sam. 5). The firstfruits liturgy (Deut. 26:5) traces Hebrew ancestry to the Aramaeans, but the designation appears to be used in a broad rather than a specific sense.

Etymological analyses of the term "Hebrew" ( *'ibri*) have given little help to the study of origins. The term has been related to a root, meaning "to go over" or "to go across"; hence, a "Hebrew" would be one who crossed over or one who went from place to place, a nomad, a wanderer, a designation that would fit some aspects of patriarchal behavior. A similar term, *habiru*, is found in cuneiform documents from the twentieth to the eleventh centuries, often used interchangeably with another word, SA.GAZ. At times the Habiru appear to be settled in specific locations; at times they serve in the army as mercenaries, or are bound to masters as servants. The El Amarna tablets refer to invaders of Palestine as *'apiru*, a word bearing close relationship to the terms *habiru* and "Hebrew."<sup>14</sup> Extensive research has led many scholars to the conclusion that the term "Hebrew" was first used as an appellative to describe foreigners who crossed into settled areas and referred not to a specific group but to a social caste. If the word "Hebrew" parallels *habiru* or *'apiru*, we know that these people on occasion were employed, at times created settlements of their own, and at other times attacked established communities. The suggestion that the terms *'apiru*, *habiru* and "Hebrew" relate to those who have renounced a relationship to an existing society, who have by a deliberate action withdrawn from some organization or rejected some authority, and who have become through this action freebooters, slaves, employees or mercenaries presents real possibilities.<sup>15</sup> In the Bible the word Hebrew becomes an ethnic term used interchangeably with "Israelite."<sup>16</sup>

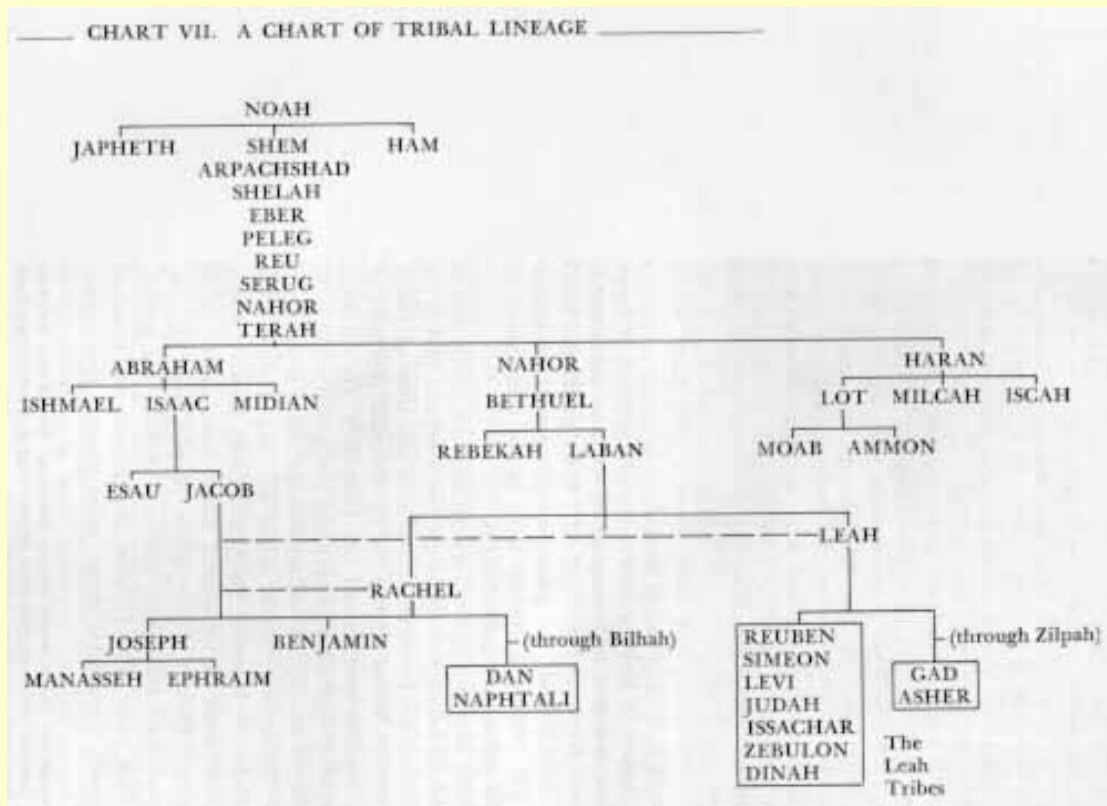
Perhaps the best that can be said is that the Hebrews of the Bible appear to be one branch of the Northwest Semitic group, related linguistically to Canaanites, Edomites and Moabites, who moved from a semi-nomadic existence to settled life in the Bronze Age.

It is clear from biblical tradition that, at the beginning of their history, the semi-nomadic Hebrews with flocks of sheep and goats were at the point of moving into a settled way of life. The patriarchs are chiefs of large families or clans living, for the most part, in peace among their neighbors with whom they enter covenants. From family and clan beginnings came tribes linked to one another by ancestral blood ties. Bonds between clans or tribes were so strong that the group might be described as having an existence of its own, a personality embodying the corporate membership. This phenomenon of psychic unity, labeled "corporate personality" by H. Wheeler Robinson,<sup>17</sup> placed particular responsibilities upon each member of the group. Because group life was a unity, injury to a single member was injury to all demanding repayment by the next of kin, the *go'el*.<sup>18</sup> Blood shed was tribal blood requiring redemption by the next of kin. Should a man die without offspring, his next of kin had to bring the widow to fruition, and the child born to her became the child of the dead man, the one carrying his name (Ruth 4:4-10). As the father was at the head of the family, so the tribal chief and elders led the larger group, seeking the well-being, peace and psychic health of the members. The corporate nature of the group afforded great protection, for wherever a member went, he was backed by the strength of the tribe to which he belonged. Fear of reprisal tended to be — but was not always — a restraining factor in violation of social mores (Judg. 19-20). When the head of the household died, the widow and orphan were cared for by the next of kin and ultimately by the total group.

Tribal and family religion centered in holy places where a local priesthood tended shrines, kept altar fires burning, and shared in offerings (I Sam. 2:12-17). The father seems to have acted as ministrant on behalf of the family (I Sam. 1). Offerings were made and a meal shared through which the participants were bound more firmly together. There is no evidence that the deity was believed to participate in the meal. Agreements made at holy places were witnessed by the deity who guaranteed fulfillment of terms (Gen. 31:51 ff.). The shrine of Ba'al-berith (Judg. 9:4) or El-berith (Judg. 9:46), the "covenant god" at Shechem, may have been a holy place where covenants were made in the presence of the god.

An important custom in Hebrew society was the practice of hospitality. A guest was honored and entertained, even at considerable expense to the host (Gen. 18:1-8, 24:28-32). Once under the host's roof, or having shared food, the guest was guaranteed protection (Gen. 19, Judg. 19). Should a stranger settle in the community, he enjoyed most of the rights and responsibilities.

From time to time new groups were grafted into the family tree of Hebrew tribes, and the heritage of the larger group became that of the adopted ones, as when the Calebites united with the tribe of Judah (Josh. 14:6-15, 15:13). When confronted by common problems or enemies, tribal federations were formed (see Judg. 4-5). On the other hand, when a famine or food shortage occurred, one group might leave to seek new territory (Gen. 13). Tribal activity in Canaan is portrayed as a twelve-tribe federation<sup>19</sup> often called an amphictyony, after Greek tribal federations.<sup>20</sup> However, clear distinctions between Greek and Hebrew patterns must be recognized. Greek cities united in an amphictyony centered about a shrine where peoples from the surrounding cities worshiped and where decisions affecting the participating members were made. The Hebrew amphictyony was centered in the Ark of Yahweh, a moveable shrine. Some scholars have argued that a primitive amphictyonic ritual was observed at the shrine at Sliechem,<sup>21</sup> but the hypothesis rests only upon probabilities. A six-tribe federation, which preceded the twelve-tribe grouping, has also been postulated involving the Leah tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun and Issachar.<sup>22</sup>



**CHART VII.** Sometimes the tribes are listed genealogically (Gen. 35:23; I Chron. 2:1-2) sometimes in cultic formation (Num. 2-3; Deut. 27:12); and sometimes geographically (Num. 34:14-28; I Chron. 6:54 ff.; Ezek. 48:1 ff.). Usually twelve tribes are mentioned, but the identification of the tribes varies: in one Dinah is listed in place of Benjamin (Gen. 29-30), and in Chronicles both halves of the tribe of Manasseh are counted (I Chron. 2-3; 6:54-80). Some lists mention only ten tribes (Deut. 33:6 ff.; II Sam. 19:43); one gives eleven tribes (I King 11:31); and in Gen. 46:48 ff. there are thirteen.

## Endnotes

1. G. von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 142 f.
2. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), pp. 105 ff.
3. Gerald A. Larue, "The American Expedition to Hebron, 1965," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXXIII (1965), 337 ff.
4. Possibly located at Tell Sheba, an unexcavated mound just east of the modern town.
5. Speiser, *Genesis*, pp. 91 ff.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 212 f.
7. Cf. G. Cornfeld (ed.), *Adam to Daniel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 85.
8. A. Alt, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), I. See also J. Bright, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 ff.
9. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*, pp. 68 ff.
10. Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, pp. 118 ff.
11. G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, p. 64; C. Kraeling, *Bible Atlas*, pp. 107 ff.
12. Y. Aharoni, "Kadesh Bamea and Mount Sinai," *God's Wilderness* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 118.
13. For a detailed statement of conjectures on Sinai and the Exodus route, cf. Kraeling, *op.*



- cit.*, chap. 6.
14. Cf. T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, chap. 1. For the suggestion that the term 'apiru means "donkey driver, caravaneer" cf. Wm. F. Albright, "Abram the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (henceforth *BASOR*), No. 163 (1961) 36-54.
  15. E. F. Campbell, "The Amarna Letters and the Amarna Period," *BA* XXIII (1960), 15; G. E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *BA* XXV (1962), 71 f.
  16. For an extended discussion of the 'Apiru-Habiru-Hebrew problem, cf. Mary F. Gray, "The Habiru-Hebrew Problem in the Light of Source Material Available at Present," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXIX (1958), pp. 135-202; Moshe Greenberg, *The Hab/piru*, American Oriental Series, XXXIX (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1955).
  17. H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments*, J. Hempel (ed.), B.Z.A.W. LXVI, 1936, pp. 49ff. See also J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1926), Vols. I-II; Aubrey R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961) ; and Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964).
  18. *Go'el* comes from a root meaning "to recover" or "buy back" or "redeem," and thus means "redeemer," "restorer" and, in a sense, "protector." For a brief discussion, cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, John McHugh, trans. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), pp. 21 f.
  19. The scheme develops out of the twelve sons of Jacob — six from Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun; two from Zilpah: Gad and Asher; two from Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; and two from Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali (cf. Gen. 29:16-30:24; 35:16-20). The final grouping for division of the land includes: Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Judah, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon and Zebulun. More than twenty variant lists occur within the Bible.
  20. Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, pp. 87 ff.; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 142 f.; Murray Newman, *The People of the Covenant* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 102 ff.
  21. Cf. Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 92 f.; Newman, *op. cit.*, pp. 108 ff.
  22. Cf. Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 f.; Newman, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

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## Akko: The Maritime Capital of the Crusader Kingdom

The port city of [Akko](#) (also known as Acre) is located on a promontory at the northern end of Haifa Bay. The earliest city was founded during the Bronze Age at Tel Akko (in Arabic Tel el-Fukhar – mound of the potsherds), just east of the present-day city. Akko is mentioned in ancient written sources as an important city on the northern coast of the Land of Israel. The wealth of finds, including remains of fortifications uncovered in the excavations at Tel Akko, attest to the long and uninterrupted occupation of the site during biblical times.

The ancient site of Akko was abandoned during the [Hellenistic period](#). A new city named Ptolemais, surrounded by a fortified wall, was built on the site of present-day Akko. The [Romans](#) improved and enlarged the natural harbor in the southern part of the city, and constructed a breakwater, thus making it one of the [main ports on the eastern Mediterranean coast](#).

The importance of Akko – a well protected, fortified city with a deepwater port – is reflected in its eventful history during the period of [Crusader](#) rule in the Holy Land.

The [Crusaders](#), who founded the [Latin Kingdom](#) of Jerusalem in 1099, did not at first succeed in overcoming Akko's fortifications. On 26 May 1104, after months of heavy siege and with the help of the Genoese fleet, the city surrendered and was handed over to King Baldwin I. Aware of the significance of the city and its port for the security of their kingdom, the [Crusaders](#) immediately began to construct a sophisticated system of fortifications composed of walls and towers, unlike any built previously.

These fortifications were built along the sea to the west and south of the city, while in the east and north a mighty wall (probably a double wall) with a broad, deep moat separated the city from the mainland. The port was also rebuilt and, according to literary sources and maps, included an outer and an inner harbor (the latter now silted). A new breakwater was built, protected by a tower at its far end; it is today known as the Tower of Flies.

The fortifications of Akko, in which the [Crusaders](#) had placed their trust, fell relatively easily to the Muslims. Shortly after their victory at the Battle of the Horns of Hattin, on 9 July 1187, the city surrendered to Salah al-Din (Saladin) and its Christian inhabitants were evacuated.

The [Crusaders](#) returned and laid siege to Akko in 1188, yet did not succeed in penetrating the massive fortifications, which they themselves had built. But the Muslims surrendered to Richard the Lion Heart, King of England and Philip Augustus, King of France (leaders of the Third Crusade) on 12 July 1191. For the following 100 years, the [Crusaders](#) ruled Akko.

[Jerusalem](#) remained (but for a short period) under [Muslim](#) rule, thus immeasurably increasing the importance of Akko, which, during the 13th century, served as the political and administrative capital of the [Latin Kingdom](#). Akko was the [Crusaders](#)' foothold in the Holy Land, a mighty fortress facing constant [Muslim](#) threat. Its port served as the Crusader Kingdom's link with Christian Europe, and also for trans-shipment westward of valuable cargoes originating in the east.

The palace (*castrum*) of the [Crusader](#) kings was located in the northern part of the urban area of Akko, enclosed by massive fortifications. Near the harbor, merchant quarters known as *communes* were established by the Italian maritime cities of Venice, Pisa and Genoa. Each quarter had a marketplace with warehouses and shops, and dwellings for the merchant families. There were also centers for the various military orders – the Hospitalers, the Templars and others, who were responsible for defense of the [Latin Kingdom](#). Throughout the city, a number of public buildings, such as churches and hospices, were constructed.

At the beginning of the 13th century, a new residential quarter called Montmusard founded north of the city. It was surrounded by its own wall (probably also a double wall). In the middle of the century, sponsored by Louis IX of France, Akko expanded and became prosperous. With a population of about 40,000, it was the largest city of the Crusader Kingdom.

The last battle between the [Crusaders](#) and the [Muslims](#) for control of Akko began in 1290. After a long siege by the [Mamluks](#) under al-Ashraf Khalil, a portion of the northern wall was penetrated; the city was conquered on 18 May 1291. The date marks the end of the [Crusader](#) presence in the Holy Land.

Buildings from the [Crusader](#) period, including the city walls, were partially or completely buried beneath buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries, when the city was part of the [Ottoman Empire](#).

## Remains from the Crusader Period

Significant remains from the [Crusader](#) period were first uncovered in Akko during the 1950s and 1960s when portions of building complexes, below ground level but almost completely preserved, were cleared of debris. During the 1990s, within the framework of the development of Akko, excavations were undertaken both outside and inside the present-day Old City walls, bringing to light fascinating remains of Akko's illustrious medieval history, previously known mainly from pilgrims' accounts.

### The Hospitalers Compound

The most important of the subterranean remains of Akko of the [Crusaders](#) is located in the northern part of today's Old City. It is the structure that was the headquarters of the Order of the Hospitalers (the Knights of St. John). It is an extensive building complex (ca. 4,500 sq. m.) with halls and many rooms built around a broad, open central courtyard. The thick walls were built of well-trimmed kurkar (local sandstone), and the complex was fortified with corner towers. When the Ottoman ruler of Akko, Ahmed al-Jazzar decided to build a citadel and a palace on the site, he had the Hospitalers' building filled in with earth.

In recent years, the 3-4 m. high earth fill blocking the central courtyard of the Hospitalers' compound was removed, revealing the 1200 sq. m. courtyard.

There are broad openings in the walls of the courtyard leading to the halls and rooms surrounding it. To support the upper storey, pointed arches issuing from broad pilasters that project from the walls were built. A 4.5 m. wide staircase supported by arches provided access from the eastern side of the courtyard to the second storey. An extensive network of drainage



channels carried rainwater from the courtyard to a main sewer. In the southwestern corner of the courtyard was a stone-built well that guaranteed the residents' water supply.

South of the courtyard is a hall, which was misnamed the Crypt of St. John. This is a rectangular hall in Gothic style, 30 x 15 m. with a 10 m. high groin-vaulted ceiling supported by three round central piers, each 3 m. in diameter. Chimneys indicate that it served as a kitchen and refectory (dining hall). *Fleurs-de-lis* (symbol of the French royal family), are carved in stone in two corners of the hall.

South of the hall lies a building complex known as al-Bosta. It is composed of a large hall with several enormous piers supporting a groin-vaulted ceiling. This subterranean building is in fact the crypt of St. John, over which the church itself was built. Portions of the church and its decorations were uncovered in the excavation.

North of the central courtyard is a row of long, parallel underground vaulted halls, 10 m. high, known as the Knights' Halls. On one side are gates opening onto the courtyard; on the other, windows and a gate facing one of the main streets of the [Crusader](#) city. These were the barracks of the members of the Order of Hospitalers.

To the east of the courtyard, the 45 x 30 m. Hall of the Pillars was exposed, which had served as a hospital. Its 8 m. high ceiling is supported by three rows of five square piers. Above this hall of columns probably stood the four-storey [Crusader](#) palace depicted in contemporary drawings.

Most of the buildings on the western side of the courtyard remain unexcavated. Several ornate capitals, illustrative of the elaborate architecture of this wing, were found. In its northern part was a public toilet with 30 toilet cubicles on each of its two floors. A network of channels drained the toilets into the central sewer of the city.

An advanced underground sewage system was found beneath the group of buildings of the Hospitalers. This network drained rainwater and wastewater into the city's central sewer. It was one meter in diameter and 1.8 m. high and runs from north to south.

## Streets

Portions of [Crusader](#) period streets were uncovered: in the Genoese quarter

in the center of the present old city of Akko, a 40 m.-long portion of a roofed street was exposed. It runs from east to west and is 5 m. wide. On both sides were buildings with courtyards and rooms facing the street serving as shops. In the Templar quarter in the southwestern part of the city, another portion of a main street leading to the harbor was uncovered. Some 200 m. of the street were exposed and along it, several [Crusader](#) buildings which had been buried beneath Ottoman structures.

### **The Crusader City Walls**

The location of the [Crusader](#) city walls is well known from detailed contemporary maps that have survived, but few traces have been found in excavations. Parts of the walls lie beneath the Ottoman fortifications; others were damaged when modern neighborhoods were built.

Near the northeastern corner of the Ottoman fortifications, a 60 m. long segment of the northern [Crusader](#) wall was found; it is some 3 m. thick, and was built of local kurkar sandstone.

A short distance eastward, parts of the corner of a tower built of large kurkar stones were preserved to a height of 6 m. The tower was fronted by a deep moat, 13 m. wide, and protected on its other side by a counterscarp wall. This section of wall belongs to the outer, northern fortifications, which were constructed in the 13th century to protect the then new Montmusard quarter. It is probably the Venetian Tower depicted in [Crusader](#) period maps. On the seashore some 750 m. north of the Old City are remains of the foundation trenches of a circular tower with a wall extending eastward from it, today covered by seawater. In the view of researchers, this is the round corner tower that stood at the western end of the wall surrounding the Montmusard quarter.

The renewed excavations at Akko were conducted by A. Druks, M. Avissar, E. Stern, M. Hartal and D. Syon on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The excavations at the Hospitalers' compound were directed by E. Stern on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)



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## Ancient Arad

Ancient Arad is located in the Negev, some 30 km. northeast of [Be'er Sheva](#), on a hill that rises 40 m. above the surrounding plain.

During the 18 seasons of excavation conducted from 1962-1984, it became clear that the remains of ancient Arad are located in two separate areas and are from two distinct periods. The Canaanite city (3rd millennium BCE) was located mainly on the southern slope of the hill. On the summit of this hill, several fortresses were built in the period of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah (10th-6th centuries BCE) and also later, during the Persian, Hellenistic and [Roman periods](#) (5th century BCE to 4th century CE). In the Early Arab period (7th-10th century), a fortified caravansary was established to protect the trade routes which passed there.

Arad is mentioned in the Bible in the story of the failed attempt to reach the Promised Land ([Numbers 21:1](#)) and in the list of the Canaanite kings defeated by the Children of Israel. ([Joshua 12:14](#)) There exists, however, a historical-chronological problem with this biblical account, as there is no evidence that Tel (Heb., mound) Arad was inhabited during the Late Bronze Age. Scholars suggest that the King of Arad mentioned in the Bible was in fact the ruler of the Kingdom of Arad, "the Negev of Arad" (Judges 1:16), whose capital was another city.

### The Canaanite City

During the Early Bronze Age (2950-2650 BCE), Arad was a large, fortified and prosperous city. It served as the capital of the important Canaanite kingdom, which ruled over a large part of the northern Negev.

The growth of Arad was part of the rapid urbanization of the Land of Israel during the 3rd millennium BCE. Technological development, such as the use of metal for plowing, the domestication of animals and the planting of fruit trees, created conditions for the establishment of large cities, even in outlying areas such as Arad.

The climate in this region is hot and dry and the amount of precipitation is minimal, but the prosperity of a large Canaanite city must have depended on an established agriculture. In the view of experts, the Negev enjoyed in the past twice the amount of rain that falls today, thus making intensive agriculture possible. The Canaanite inhabitants of Arad grew wheat, barley and beans in the valley, and constructed earth dams in the wadis (dry river beds) to increase the amount of water for the orchards, mainly olive groves. Bones of goats, sheep and cattle, found in the ruins of the city's houses, attest to another element in the inhabitants' diet. The city was located at the crossroads of two main trade routes - the one southward from the Judean Hills to the Negev and Edom, and the other westward from the shores of the [Dead Sea](#), across the Negev, to the southern coast - which also contributed to the prosperity of ancient Arad.

Canaanite Arad developed close trade relations with Egypt, evidence of which are the numerous vessels made in Egypt, and a fragment of a ceramic storage jar bearing the name of Narmer, King of Egypt, found at Arad. Copper objects from the royal mines in Sinai were acquired by the inhabitants of Arad, and probably paid for with agricultural products, olive oil and livestock. Bitumen originating from the [Dead Sea](#), used for the sealing of sailing vessels as well as storage jars, and possibly also for mummifying, also made its way from the [Dead Sea](#) via Arad to Egypt.

Canaanite Arad covered an area of about 25 acres and had an estimated population of 2,500. The city was surrounded by a fortified wall, some 1,200 m. long and 2.4 m. thick, with many semi-circular or rectangular towers projecting from it. Two gates and two posterns have been found thus far in the wall.

The city itself was very carefully planned, with a network of streets. Along the inside of the wall was the main ring road; and from the gates ran cross streets towards the topographical depression at the city's center, which drained rainwater into a large reservoir, thus guaranteeing continued water supply during the long summers. The part of the city which has been excavated, was divided into quarters, each with a specific function: in the western part was the temple complex; in the south the residential areas.

## Dwelling

The residential area was densely built-up, with streets and alleys between the blocks of houses. Dwellings were of many sizes, the smallest ca. 50 sq. m. and the largest ca. 150 sq.m., but similarly planned: a walled courtyard, one or two living rooms and a small utility room or kitchen.

The typical living room in an Arad house was rectangular and had an opening to the courtyard in one of its long walls. The room, slightly below the level of the courtyard, was reached by descending two or three steps. The opening was closed with a wooden door, which pivoted in a socket in the stone threshold. Along the walls were low stone benches and in the center of the room was a stone base, on which a wooden pillar stood, supporting the roof which was made of wooden beams, bundles of straw and plaster. Grinding stones and a stone mortar for crushing grain were embedded in the floor. Containers made of dried mud for the storage of grain and clay stoves for heating and cooking were also found in the houses. A small clay model of a living room was found in one of the houses, showing the ceiling-high entrance and the flat roof.

## Temples and a Palace

The sacred precinct and the palace complex of the kings of Arad extended over enormous areas - each about 1,000 sq.m. - in the western part of the city. The sacred precinct included two twin temples dedicated to the gods of the city.

The larger of the twin temples had two halls, one divided into three rooms, the smallest of which was the holy-of-holies. In one of the rooms, a well-trimmed stone stele was found standing upright, probably representing the god's presence in the temple. In the courtyard stood a stone altar, and next to it a sunken, ceremonial basin lined with stones, probably for ritual immersion.

The palace of the kings of Canaanite Arad was comprised of several units. At its center were the royal chambers - several large rooms. Around them were courtyards with groups of rooms, which probably served as administration offices and servants' quarters. In the palace grounds stood the royal storehouse, in which storage installations and a large numbers of ceramic storage vessels were found.

## Stele

In the palace's central room, a flat piece of chalk was found, on which two human figures had been incised: one of the figures lying horizontally, the other standing upright; the hands raised, with fingers outstretched; the heads depicted as ears of grain.

The scene is known from religious art of the ancient world and is interpreted as representing the Mesopotamian god Tammuz in two phases of the endless cycle of nature: the standing figure represents the half year of regeneration and growth - life; the supine figure symbolizes the half of the year during which plants wither - death.

Arad declined and was abandoned in the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE. The reasons for this are not completely clear, but it is assumed that the climate became hotter and drier, adversely influencing the settlements on the fringe of the desert. Also, the nomadic populations of the Negev probably endangered the trade routes, and the security of the city's population.

## The Israelite Citadel

During the period of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (10th-6th centuries BCE), successive citadels were built on the hill of Arad as part of a series of fortifications protecting the trade routes in the Negev and the southern border of the kingdom against marauding nomads.

The first of these citadels was built by [King Solomon](#) (10th century BCE). It measured 55 x 50 m. and was surrounded by a casemate wall (two parallel walls with cross-walls between them) 5 m. thick, and with a gate protected by two towers in its eastern side. Large towers protruded from the corners and along the wall. Inside the citadel were quarters for the garrison, storerooms, and a temple. A water reservoir cut into the rock beneath the citadel was filled with water from a well dug into the Canaanite reservoir south of the citadel. This well was 4.60 m. in diameter and 21 m. deep, to groundwater level, the upper part carefully lined with stones. The water drawn from the well was carried up the hill by pack animals to an opening in the wall of the citadel, and from there flowed in a channel to the reservoir.

In the 9th century BCE, a new citadel was built, surrounded by a massive, 4 m.-thick wall. This citadel, with various modifications, remained in use

until the Babylonian conquest of the Kingdom of Judah in 587/6 BCE.

## The Israelite Temple

Located in the northwestern corner of the citadel, the temple comprised three rooms along an east-west axis: ulam (entrance hall), heichal (main hall), and dvir (holy-of-holies). To reach the dvir three steps had to be mounted to an elevated platform, on which a one-meter high stone stele, painted red, stood. Stone altars, 50 cm. high, flanked both sides of the entrance to the dvir. The tops of the altars were concave and in them burnt organic material was found. At the center of the large courtyard in front of the temple was an altar built of bricks and stone, measuring 2.5 x 2.5 m. (5 x 5 biblical amot). It was probably similar to the altar described in the Bible ([Deut. 27:5](#)) and to that in the Temple in Jerusalem. ([II Chronicles 6:13](#))

The Israelite temple discovered at Arad is the only one known outside of Jerusalem. It was part of the first Israelite citadel there and served as a roadside temple for travelers, merchants and the garrison of the citadel. This temple was destroyed, apparently as a result of the religious reforms of Hezekiah, King of Judah, at the end of the 8th century BCE. ([II Kings 18: 4, 22](#))

## Ostraca (inscribed potsherds)

Over 100 ostraca inscribed in biblical Hebrew (in paleo-Hebrew script) were found in the citadel of Arad. This is the largest and richest collection of inscriptions from the biblical period ever discovered in Israel. The letters are from all periods of the citadel's existence, but most date to the last decades of the kingdom of Judah. Dates and several names of places in the Negev are mentioned, including [Be'er Sheva](#).

Among the personal names are those of the priestly families Pashur and Meremoth, both mentioned in the Bible. ([Jeremiah 20:1](#); [Ezra 8:33](#)) Some of the letters were addressed to the commander of the citadel of Arad, Eliashiv ben Ashiyahu, and deal with the distribution of bread (flour), wine and oil to the soldiers serving in the fortresses of the Negev. Seals bearing the inscription "Eliashiv ben Ashiyahu" were also found.

Some of the commander's letters (probably "file" copies) were addressed to his superior and deal with the deteriorating security situation in the Negev.



In one of them, he gives warning of an emergency and requests reinforcements to be sent to another citadel in the region to repulse an Edomite invasion. Also, in one of the letters, the "house of YHWH" is mentioned.

### Inscription 1

*To Eliashib: And now, give the Kittiyim 3 baths of wine, and write the name of the day. And from the rest of the first flour, send one homer in order to make bread for them. Give them the wine from the aganoth vessels.*

### Inscription 24

*From Arad 50 and from Kin[ah]...  
and you shall send them to Ramat-Negev by the hand of Malkiyahu the son of Kerab'ur and he shall hand them over to Elisha the son of Yirmiyahu in Ramat-Negev, lest anything should happen to the city. And the word of the king is incumbent upon you for your very life! Behold, I have sent to warn you today: [Get] the men to Elisha: lest Edom should come there.*

### Inscription 40

*Your son Gemar[yahu] and Nehemyahu gre[et] Malkiyahu; I have blessed [you to the Lor]d and now: your servant has listened to what [you] have said, and I [have written] to my lord [everything that] the man [wa]nted, [and Eshiyahu ca]me from you and [no] one [gave it to] them. And behold you knew [about the letters from] Edom (that) I gave to [my] lord [before sun]set. And [E]shi[yah]u slept [at my house], and he asked for the letter, [but I didn't gi]ve (it). The King of Judah should know [that w]e cannot send the [...], and th]is is the evil that Edo[m has done].*

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/arad.html).

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## Apollonia-Arsuf

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Since 1996, wide-scale archeological excavations have been conducted at the site, but mainly in the [Crusader](#) fortress, with a view of turning it into a national park. Portions of the city wall and its eastern gate were found, as were the remains of the fortress' defenses and buildings.

The Crusader city and fortress, now known as Apollonia-Arsuf, were built on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, some 15 km. north of modern [Tel Aviv](#).

Excavations conducted periodically since the 1950s have revealed that a settlement was established on the site during the [Persian](#) period (6th-5th centuries BCE), known as Arshuf, after the Canaanite-Phoenician god of fertility and the underworld, Reshef. During the [Hellenistic](#) period, Reshef was identified with the Greek god Apollo and hence the name Apollonia. The inhabitants of this ancient town produced a special purple dye derived from murex mollusks and exported it, making use of the natural anchorage. During the [Roman](#) period, the size of the town increased; the remains of a large, elegant villa constructed in the finest Roman architectural tradition were uncovered. But it was during the [Byzantine](#) period that the town became very prosperous, and expanded to cover an area of about 70 acres. The remains of buildings, industrial installations and an elaborate church of this period have been exposed. In the Early Arab period, when the Semitic name Arsuf was restored to the town, its area decreased to about 22 acres and, for the first time, it was surrounded by a fortified wall with buttresses.

Shortly after the Crusaders conquered [Jerusalem](#) in 1099, they made their



first attempt to capture Arsuf. They failed, because of the lack of a fleet to impose a naval blockade. But in the spring of 1101, after only a short battle, the city fell to the Crusader army commanded by Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem. The Crusaders rebuilt the city wall of Arsur (their way of pronouncing the name) and constructed a fortress on the cliffs overlooking the sea. After the defeat of the Crusaders at the Horns of Hattin in 1187, Arsuf came under [Muslim](#) control, but on 7 September 1191, in a battle fought outside the city between the Crusader army under Richard the Lion-Heart and the Muslim army under Salah ed-Din (Saladin) the Muslims were defeated. Arsur was once again ruled by the Crusaders, who refortified it in the mid-13th century. Crusader rule came to an end in 1265, when, after a forty-day siege, the city was conquered by the [Mamluk](#) ruler Baibars and the defenders of the fortress surrendered. The Muslims razed the city walls and the fortress to their foundations, fearing a return of the Crusaders. The destruction was so complete that the site has not been resettled since, and over the next several hundred years its remains were covered by earth and wind-blown sand.

## The Fortifications of the City

A portion of the city wall of Apollonia-Arsur and a corner tower were exposed in the southeastern part of the city. The city-wall was 2.2 m. thick, constructed of well-trimmed kurkar blocks and cement. A 9 m.-wide moat protected the wall, its outer edge supported by a stone counter scarp. The city gate was located in the center of the eastern wall. It consisted of two elongated, semi-circular towers that protruded outward from the line of the wall. The towers were widened toward their bases, reaching a diameter of 4.4 m. The 2.2m.-wide gateway was probably reached via a wooden bridge, supported by an arch, over the moat.

## The Crusader Fortress

The Crusader fortress at Apollonia-Arsur is located in the northwestern corner of the city. The fortress was protected by three fortification networks that included walls with towers and a moat. The walls surrounded the fortress on four sides; in addition, a 30 m.-high cliff in the west provided adequate protection. The fortress was constructed of trimmed kurkar reinforced with cement. Its water supply was assured by large cisterns built below it, in which rainwater was collected.

The outer fortification system consisted of a retaining wall, the foundations of which were laid in the bottom of the moat and five semi-

circular towers, each 23 m. in diameter, with loopholes for archers. This wall created a solid, wide-based podium on which stood the middle defensive system. A particularly broad moat, up to 30 m. wide and some 14 m. deep, protected the fortification; the outer wall of the moat supported a high counter scarp. A 4.5 m.-wide pilaster protruding from the southeastern corner of the moat and another pilaster located opposite it on the inner side of the moat indicate that there was a wooden drawbridge, which provided access to the fortress over the moat.

The middle fortification and the main gate. The 4 m.-thick wall was protected by semi-circular towers. The gate facing east consisted of two elongated apsidal towers, 12 x 4.5 m. each, that widened toward their bases. One entered the towers from the inner courtyard via openings in their western side. The passageway between the towers was paved with rectangular, evenly laid kurkar slabs. Stone benches stood along the walls on both sides of the entrance. The threshold of the gate, made of a marble pillar in secondary use, was exposed in its entirety. The two wooden door wings closing the gate were mounted on iron hinges, one of which was preserved intact. In front of the entrance were pilasters with grooves used to lower an iron net to protect the door.

The inner defensive system consisted of 3 m.-wide wall segments that closed the inner courtyard of the fortress. On the western side the courtyard was closed by a sturdy tower, which served as the donjon of the fortress. The inner courtyard, measuring 28 x 10 m., gave access to parts of the inner fortress and to the arched halls beneath it. Around the courtyard were rooms and halls with vaulted roofing and staircases leading to second storeys, which served as the garrison's barracks. Large, round grindstones were found on the northern side of the courtyard; the kitchen of the fortress (10 x 7 m.) was located in the courtyard's northwestern corner. It was paved with stone slabs and contained five ovens, two tubs for water, a piped water system and had a small service room. The donjon is located on the western side of the courtyard, opposite the gate. Its upper part, planned as an octagonal tower, was later converted into a square one. It was probably 10 m. high and was intended as a final refuge for the defenders of the fortress. The lower part of this tower consisted of a 4m.-wide, elongated hall, roofed with a graded vault; it opened to the subterranean spaces which led towards the harbor.

Significant evidence of the [Mamluk](#) siege in 1265 and the ensuing battle to conquer the city and the fortress was found. One of the tunnels, which had been cut beneath the city's fortifications in an attempt to topple them, was uncovered and massive stones from the collapse were found in the

moat. A huge layer of ash, produced by a conflagration, covered parts of the fortress and large numbers of arrowheads and ballista stone balls were found scattered everywhere.

*The excavations since 1996 were directed by I. Roll on behalf of Tel Aviv University.*

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# Archaeological Sites in Israel — An Introduction

by Hillel Geva

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[Archeology](#) provides a valuable link between Israel's past and present. Thousands of sites have been excavated throughout the country, providing an opportunity to study its rich history and shedding light on the culture, society and daily life of its inhabitants throughout the centuries.

Jewish history begins with the patriarchs — [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#) and [Jacob](#) — some 4,000 years ago. Many finds attest to the long connection of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel and highlight the biblical narrative. Excavations have also revealed remains of other civilizations which have left their imprint on the country.

The archeological sites included here describe discoveries at selected archeological sites, accompanied by historical notes. The sites were chosen for features of interest rather than for scientific importance and are arranged in geographical order from north to south. It is our intention to provide the interested layperson with an insight into the ongoing study of the past that is carried out in Israel, and it is our hope that this will prove an enriching reading experience.



1. [Dan: The Biblical City](#)
2. [The Roman Boat from the Sea of Galilee](#)
3. [Zippori](#)
4. [The Monastery of Martyrius](#)
5. [Jerusalem — The City of David](#)
6. [Jerusalem — Silver Plaques](#)
7. [The Western Wall and its Tunnels](#)
8. [The Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#)
9. [Beersheba — the Southern Border of the Kingdom of Judah](#)
10. [The Eilat Region](#)

## Recent Archeological Discoveries

### The Church of “Mary’s Seat”

The remains of a large [Byzantine](#) church (5th - 7th century), octagonal in shape and with multicolored mosaic pavement, was discovered near the highway leading from [Jerusalem](#) to Bethlehem. A flat rock in the center of the church is believed to be the *Kathisma* — the seat where the pregnant Mary rested on her way to [Bethlehem](#) — mentioned in early Christian sources.

## Beitsaida

A stone *stela* was exposed at the Iron Age II (9th - 8th century BCE) [Beitsaida](#) city gate on the northern shore of the [Sea of Galilee](#). It bears an engraved depiction of a bull-headed warrior armed with a dagger — probably representing the Aramean god Haddad, also known by his biblical name Ba'al, god of rainfall and fertility.

## Hatzor

At Tel Hatzor in Galilee, site of the largest Canaanite city in biblical times ([Joshua 11:10](#)), a carved basalt orthostat depicting a lion was uncovered. Dated to the Late Bronze Age (15th - 13th century BCE), it was in secondary use in the Israelite level of the upper city. The orthostat weighs about a ton and is preserved in extremely good condition. It was probably one of a pair of lions that once guarded the entrance to the Canaanite royal palace of Hatzor (an identical lion was exposed in the Canaanite temple of the lower city of Hatzor during excavations in the 1950s).

## Beit Shean

Two monumental Arabic inscriptions, in square Kufic script, were uncovered on the door jambs of the gate to the city's bazaar, built at the beginning of the 8th century by the [Umayyad](#) Caliph Abdallah Hisham. The letters are formed by green glass tesserae covered by gold foil and a thin layer of glass. The inscription reads:

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,  
 Ever Merciful. Ordered this  
 building Abdallah  
 Hisham, Commander of the Faithful,  
 [to be built] by the governor Ishaq  
 son of Qabisa (completed?) the year  
 [ ] and one hundred

## Jerusalem, City of David

The remains of an impressive structure of the monarchy period, founded on bedrock and built of very large, roughly hewn rectangular stones, was discovered above the Gihon spring in the Kidron Valley. It is believed to be part of the fortifications built at the end of the [First Temple](#) period (8th-7th century BCE) by Menassah, King of Judah, to defend the entrance to the Gihon spring: *Now after this he built a wall without the City of David on the west side of the Gihon, in the Valley...* ([2 Chronicles 33:14](#))





1. [Banyas: Cult Center of the God Pan](#)
2. [Gamala: Jewish City on the Golan](#)
3. [Kursi: Christian Monastery on the Shore of the Sea of Galilee](#)
4. [The Carmel Caves: Dwellings of Prehistoric Man](#)
5. [Jerusalem: An Inscribed Pomegranate from the Solomonic Temple](#)
6. [Jerusalem — Burial Sites and Tombs of the Second Temple Period](#)
7. [Jerusalem: The Northern Gate of Aelia Capitolina](#)
8. [Jerusalem: Umayyad Administration Center and Palaces](#)
9. [Lachish: Royal City of the Kingdom of Judah](#)
10. [Timna: Valley of the Ancient Copper Mines](#)

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry: “Jerusalem” in the *New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* and editor of *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*.

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Sources: Israel Information Center, Jerusalem, September 1997 & January 1998

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## Archeology - 21st Century Style

by Daniella Ashkenazy

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Advanced infra-red aerial photography - otherwise used to check water sources, in intelligence surveys and more - is today being employed in [archeological excavations](#) in a variety of ways.

Leviah, a nine-hectare site from the early bronze period in the southern [Golan Heights](#), was photographed from a helicopter by members of the TAU Geography Department at 3 AM in mid-winter. The camera picked up heat stored by rocks close to the surface that cooled slower than the surrounding soil, and revealed the outlines of walls close to the surface. The following summer, an untouched 100 square meter section of Leviah was excavated and compared with the aerial photograph.

The excavation showed that remote sensory infra-red photography had revealed the presence of 80% of the basalt walls close to the surface. The sections of the walls that were "missed" by the sensitive camera were sections that had collapsed or been buried under debris. When the walls were exposed, it became apparent that the whole excavated area had been entirely built up, and had contained multi-roomed buildings and courtyards. The archeological team, headed by Professors Pirhyia Beck and Moshe Kochavi of Tel Aviv University's Department of Archeology, thus concluded that the site was a densely-settled Canaanite town, not a sparsely-populated agrarian settlement with shelters for animals, as many had previously postulated. This discovery, along with the fact that there are some twenty similar sites on the Golan Heights, indicates that the Golan may have been one of the more prosperous and populous areas in the Land of Israel in ancient times.

DNA testing - another modern procedure - was employed during an excavation in Ashkelon on the coast, when a Hebrew University archeological team headed by Professors Ariella Oppenheim and Patricia Smith came upon 100 skeletons of infants in an ancient sewer leading from a bathhouse from the late [Roman](#) or [Byzantine](#) periods. The team found a [Greek](#) inscription in the bathhouse, reading "Enter, enjoy and..." indicating that the establishment might also have served as a brothel, a common feature of the times. At the same excavation site, vessels containing infant remains who had received far more respectful treatment were also unearthed. The bones of the infants at the bathhouse, though, were found mixed with animal bones, pottery shards and coins without any sign of orderly burial. Examination of the size and dental development of the skeletons by Professor Charles Greenblatt of the University's medical and dentistry school confirmed that all were newborn infants. Both findings strengthened assumptions they had been victims of infanticide. Killing of female offspring was widespread practice of the Romans. Male infanticide was, however, a rarity. Thus, when researchers sent 19 left femoral bones for DNA testing, they were surprised to find that 14 of the infants were male and only five female. This anomaly led researchers to postulate that what they had found were the remains of offspring born to courtesans working at the bathhouse, rather than the "unwanted" female offspring of residents of the busy port city.

It has been suggested that DNA testing could also be applied to double-check whether the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) on display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem were pieced together correctly. Since the scrolls are written on parchment, it would be possible to see if fragments matched together indeed came from the same piece of parchment.

In another case of modern archeology, researchers using a portable infrared spectrometer discovered what may possibly be one of the oldest "garbage dumps" in the history of mankind. The archeologists believed that the piles of deer, gazelle and wild cattle bones found in areas of the Keraba cave on Mount Carmel were the leftovers of Stone Age dinners.

This seemed to indicate that prehistoric man divided his living space into different areas for particular activities - building fires at the entrance, with living quarters at the back. But, no one knew for certain whether these bone concentrations were intentional or whether animal bones were absent from other areas because they had been dissolved by groundwater over the ages.

To solve this question, Professors Paul Goldberg of the University of Texas and Ofer Bar-Yosef of Harvard mobilized an expert in biomineralization - Professor Stephen Weiner of the Weizmann Institute's Department of Environmental Sciences and Energy Research. Weiner used his knowledge of biomineralization - the process by which bones, teeth and other inorganic structures form in living organisms - as a basis for determining what had happened tens of thousands of years ago. Armed with a computer equipped with special software for mineral identification and a portable infrared spectrometer, Weiner was able to look for traces of minerals associated with the presence of bones in other areas of the cave. The examination found that the other areas never contained bones.

The logical conclusion: Prehistoric man had yet to be harnessed into "taking out the garbage" after dinner. Cavewomen maintained a clean hearth by prevailing standards content to throw the remains of dinner into designated piles in the corners of their caves....

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Source: Israel Magazine-On-Web, May 1998,: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Avdat: A Nabatean City in the Negev

Avdat is located on a mountain ridge in the center of the Negev highlands. At this point, where the routes from Petra (in present-day Jordan) and Eilat converge and continue to the Mediterranean coast, the Nabateans established a road station for their caravans.

The little we know about the Nabateans comes from Roman historians and geographers. They were nomadic tribes from northern Arabia who wandered and traded, then established permanent settlements and finally created an independent kingdom with Petra, in the mountains of Edom, as their capital. At the climax of their power, from the first century BCE to the first century CE, the Nabatean kings ruled regions that today belong to Jordan, Syria, and Israel. Their contact with the Hellenistic world had great influence on their material culture, uniquely manifest in their architecture.

The Nabateans accumulated great wealth from their trade in costly perfumes and spices from East Africa and Arabia which they transported by camel caravans to the southern Mediterranean coast, with Gaza serving as the main depot and port. The Negev was the direct overland link to the Mediterranean coast, and the Nabatean way stations at the main crossroads in the Negev, developed into cities. In this inhospitable desert region, the Nabateans developed an agriculture based on terraces built on the hillsides. To capture flood waters, they constructed dams in the valleys; to collect rain water, they cut cisterns in the rock. These measures, initiated by the Nabatean central administration, established their control over the Negev and guaranteed the caravans' safe passage.

The Nabatean kingdom was conquered by the Romans in 106 CE and annexed to the Roman Empire. Devoid of its caravan trade, Avdat fell into



decline. In the third century it became a short-lived settlement which was destroyed in the earthquake of 363. In the sixth century, under Byzantine rule, a citadel and a monastery with two churches were built on the acropolis and residential quarters were established on the slopes. This city was destroyed, probably by earthquake, and abandoned in the seventh century.

The main excavations at Avdat were carried out between 1958 and 1961. From then and until 1993, further limited excavations were conducted, which resulted in the discovery of many artifacts, including tens of inscriptions which greatly contribute to our knowledge of the city's history and culture during the different phases of its existence.

## **Nabatean Avdat**

Avdat was founded in the 1st century BCE and named after the Nabatean King Obodas who was revered as a deity and, according to tradition, was buried there. His name is preserved in the city's Arabic name, Abdah.

On the acropolis of Avdat, the Nabateans built a temple complex and public buildings which were visible from afar and served as a landmark to the caravaneers. Atop the spur east of the acropolis, Nabatean Avdat also included a residential quarter, a military camp and various pens in which camels, sheep and goats were kept, and horses – which became famous as racehorses – were bred.

The early temple of Obodas was built at the end of the first century BCE, on the southern side of the acropolis. It's dimensions were 14 x 11 m. and it was partly preserved under the southwestern tower of the Byzantine fort. It consisted of a porch, a hall and an adyton at its northern end. The latter was divided into two rooms, in which the two main Nabatean dieties, Dushara and Allat were worshipped.

A new temple was built on the acropolis towards the end of the 1st century CE, of which only the podium, constructed of three strong retaining walls which surrounded the edge of the cliff, remain. An elaborate entranceway (10 x 6 m.) was built at the lower southwestern corner of the podium from which one ascended to the temple via a spiral staircase that wound around a thick central pier. In the debris of the entranceway numerous inscriptions were found, including some mentioning the Nabatean King Haretat (Aretas). Many column sections bearing masons' marks which were found in secondary use in later buildings, apparently belonged to the columns of



the temple's exedra, of which only some stone pavement on the podium has been preserved.

Northeast of the acropolis was a military camp which housed the riders of the camel corps units which protected the caravan routes. The camp measured 100 x 100 m. and was surrounded by a wall with corner towers and a gate.

A unique find of the Nabataean period is the pottery workshop at Avdat. This building covered 140 sq.m. and included a room for preparing the clay and a room with a potter's wheel and a kiln for firing. An abundance of pottery, including Nabatean painted ware, delicately decorated with reddishbrown floral patterns, was found here.

## Roman Avdat

In the middle of the 3rd century, Avdat was resettled as part of the southern defense system of [Roman](#) Palestine. It became an important military outpost and permanent settlement of nomads of Arabian origin was encouraged. On the acropolis, a temple to Zeus Oboda (Zeus of the city of Oboda) was erected in 267-8 which, like the previous Nabatean temple, was dismantled and its stones used in [Byzantine](#) buildings.

The residential quarter of the [Roman](#) city included several dozen dwellings on the spur southeast of the acropolis. These were courtyard-type houses, built along narrow, intersecting streets. The rooms were roofed in an interesting fashion: two, three or four arches supported roofing of long, flat stone slabs, the length of which determined the distance between the arches – a creative solution to the absence of local wood!

## Byzantine Avdat

Avdat reached the peak of its prosperity during the 6th century. The city had an estimated population of 3,000 and continued to serve as an outpost in the defense of the Negev. An effort was also made to renew the Arab caravan trade and new agricultural crops were grown; several winepresses which have been excavated, indicate intensive vine cultivation in the region.

The acropolis area was completely rebuilt, destroying and burying the remains of the temples and buildings of the Nabatean and [Roman](#) periods. The acropolis was divided into a religious area – the monastery – in the

west and a citadel in the east.

Two churches and service buildings were constructed in the acropolis monastery. The northern church, in basilical style, was reached through an atrium with a cistern and had a single apse. Behind it, to the west, was a baptismal font in cruciform shape and a smaller font for baptizing infants.

The more important southern church had three apses on the eastern side. In the floor are reliquaries for the remains of local saints. In the floor of the prayer hall of the church are the tombs of clerical dignitaries.

Inscriptions on stone slabs covering the tombs, dating from 542 to 618, provide information regarding the [Byzantine](#) Christian community of Avdat. One of the inscriptions records the name of the church: the Martyrion of St. Theodorus. Theodorus, also known from other inscriptions, served as abbot of the monastery at Avdat and was buried in the southern church.

On the eastern side of the acropolis, a citadel was built at the beginning of the [Byzantine](#) period, for protection against marauding nomads. The fortress (60 x 40 m.) was surrounded by a wall with three towers on each side and a gate connecting it with the monastery. A large cistern was cut into the rock in the center of the citadel courtyard. On its northern side was a small chapel for the use of the soldiers garrisoned here.

In the renewed excavations during the 1990s, a long section of a massive stone wall along the eastern edge of the site, not protected by cliffs, was found. The wall was 1.20 m. thick and had a well-built gate.

The [Byzantine](#) residential quarter included numerous buildings on the slopes below the acropolis. They were erected on several terraces and included, behind the buildings, caves cut into the soft limestone of the hillside. The structures excavated included courtyards and rooms roofed with arches covered over with stone slabs. In the caves, storage spaces were cut and even a winepress was found in one of them. Some of the caves were decorated with carved bulls' heads. Also found were inscriptions in red paint including a cross. One inscription is a request to St. Theodorus, patron of the city, for protection against the evil eye.

Excavations: 1958 – M. Avi Yonah and 1959-61 – A. Negev on behalf of the National Parks Authority and the Hebrew University; 1975-77 – A. Negev and R. Cohen on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the

Hebrew University;

1989 – A. Negev on behalf of the Hebrew University; 1992-93 – G. Tahal, O. Katz and P. Fabian on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority; 1999 – renewed excavations by P. Fabian on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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## Banyas: Cult Center of the God Pan

The remains of the city of Banyas (Arabic pronunciation of Panias) are located in northern Israel, at the foot of Mt. Hermon. Here, below a steep cliff, the cold waters of the Banyas spring, one of the sources of the Jordan River, gush forth.

According to written sources, Banyas was first settled in the Hellenistic period. The Ptolemaic kings, in the 3rd century BCE, built a cult center to counter the Semitic one at Dan to the south, which indeed gradually declined. Then, in 200 BCE, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic army in this region and captured Banyas.

Almost 200 years later, in 20 BCE, the region which included Banyas was annexed to the Kingdom of Herod the Great and was ruled by his successors until the end of the first century CE. In the year 2 BCE, Herod Philip founded a pagan city and named it Caesarea Philippi (in honor of Augustus Caesar). It became the capital of his large kingdom which spread across the Golan and the Hauran. Contemporary sources refer to the city as Caesarea Panias; the New Testament as Caesarea Philippi. (Matt. 16:13)

During the Roman period, the center of the city spread over a plateau measuring 300 x 300 m., with natural features protecting it on three sides. At its peak, it extended even beyond these natural boundaries.

From the fourth century and until the Arab conquest, Panias functioned as an important Christian center. During the Arab period, the city was the district capital of the Golan in the province of Damascus and its name was changed to Banyas. During Fatimid rule in the 11th century, fortifications were constructed. Then the Crusaders, who ruled the town from 1129,

surrounded it with a massive ring of fortifications. However, after repeated attacks, the city was conquered by Nur ed-Din of Damascus in 1164. Fearing that it might again serve as a Crusader fortress, the fortifications were dismantled at the beginning of the 13th century and are, therefore, only partly visible.

Banyas gradually lost its importance. Today there is a Druze holy place (Weli Sheikh Khader) in a whitewashed building on the cliff overlooking the spring.

Since 1967, but mainly during the last ten years, major excavations at the site have focused upon two areas: the remains of the sanctuary complex to the god Pan; and the center of the city - the latter continue to the present.

The *temenos* (sacred precinct) dedicated to Pan was constructed on an elevated, 80 m. long natural terrace along a cliff which towered over the north of the city. At its western end is a large grotto which has been regarded as sacred to Pan since the Hellenistic period. At the foot of the sacred precinct is the spring, a major component in the site's sanctity. The cult site to the god Pan derives from the juxtaposition of natural features which include forest, spring and cave. From time immemorial, the site had been visited by wandering shepherds who worshiped at the cave and the spring.

The excavations uncovered remains of a cult center dedicated to the god Pan which developed in several phases during the Roman period. The *temenos* included a temple, courtyards, a grotto and niches for rituals. Several decorated niches were cut into the rock cliff, in which statues probably stood in the past. Inscriptions, mentioning donors, were carved between the niches. Of the temples which stood here, only the foundations survived. Following the Muslim conquest in the 7th century, this pagan cult center which had existed throughout the Byzantine period was destroyed and the ashlar of the walls removed for re-use.

## The Temple of Zeus

Opposite the entrance to the sacred grotto, Herod the Great, in 19 BCE, built a temple in honor of his patron, Augustus Caesar, described by the contemporary Jewish historian Josephus Flavius (*The Jewish War* I: 404-405). This temple was 20 m. long and had two parallel walls, 10.5 m. apart. Cult niches which once contained sculptures were found along the inner faces of the walls, which also served as retaining walls. This semi-

subterranean building also provided access to the sacred grotto behind the temple. This temple, only partly preserved, is depicted on contemporary coins minted by the city, showing a facade decorated with four Ionic columns.

## **The Court of Pan and the Nymphs**

During the first century CE another shrine, dedicated to Pan and the Nymphs, was constructed east of the Temple of Augustus. This building consisted of three especially thick walls with cement foundations; it abutted the cliff on its north, creating a rectangular enclosure measuring 15 x 10 m. which apparently served as an open-air shrine. A small grotto was cut into the rock cliff behind it and, in a later period, niches for statues were added. A Greek inscription indicates that these niches date to the year 148: "The priest Victor, son of Lysimachos, dedicated this goddess to the god Pan, lover of Echo."

## **The Temple of Zeus and the Nemesis Courtyard**

Around the year 100 (the 100th anniversary of Panias), during the reign of Trajanus Caesar, a Temple of Zeus was built at Banyas, east of the previous one. The temple consisted of two rooms: a hall measuring 8.25 x 7.6 m. which was originally covered with colored marble slabs and a 4.25 m.- wide front porch. The facade of the building was decorated with four columns with Corinthian capitals of especially fine workmanship. It has been suggested that rituals were also carried out on the roof of the building, opposite the niches cut into the cliff face. A 4 m.-wide paved courtyard, approached from the south by a broad staircase, was dedicated to Nemesis, goddess of revenge and justice, whose cult was popular in the region. A carved niche in the rock cliff above it bears the inscription: "For the preservation of our lords the emperors, Valerios [Titi]anos, priest of god Pan, dedicated to the lady Nemesis and her Shrine which was made by cutting away the rock underneath... with the iron fence in the month of Apellaios."

## **Temple Tomb of the Goats**

In the third century, a cultic building for the burial of the bones of the sacred goats was erected at the eastern end of the sacred precinct. The structure was divided into three long halls oriented north-south. Along the walls of the central hall (which measures 12.5 x 6.6 m.) were two low galleries supported by rectangular niches (0.6 sq. m. each) opening onto



the central hall. The niches contained sherds and a large quantity of animal bones, mainly of sheep and goats, bringing to mind the cult of the sacred goats related to the god Pan, as depicted on Roman coins of the city of Panias. These finds suggest that the structure was used as a temple-tomb for the interment of the bones of the sacred goats, whose cult was probably practiced in the buildings excavated at Banyas.

The temple was found covered by a mound of debris with an abundance of fragments of statues and statuettes, among them Athena, Zeus, Aphrodite, Apollo, Dionysos and Pan. The best-preserved statue (restored from two fragments) is that of a half life-size Artemis with a hunting dog attacking a hare at her feet. The statues and statuettes were probably offerings brought to the sacred precinct and destroyed as an act of anti-paganism at the end of the Byzantine period or in the early Arab period.

The Banyas National Park, which includes the excavated and restored archeological remains, is a unique tourist attraction, with a combination of wild natural beauty: cliffs, mountains, forest and an abundance of flowing water.

The excavations were directed by Zvi Ma'oz on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## Be'er Shema - The Church of St. Stephen

by [Hillel Geva](#)

Located in the western [Negev](#), some 25 km. west of [Be'er Sheva](#), Horvat Be'er Shema (Hebrew, Ruins of Be'er Shema) was a large village during the Roman-Byzantine period. Its ancient name - Birsama - was mentioned in writings of that period as an important fortress, which served as the administrative center of a region known as Gerar (see below, the inscription found in the church). The fortress and the village, on the main road from the east to the port of Gaza, covered an area of about 100 acres. Wells dug into the aquifer ensured its water supply.

In 1989-1990 the remains of a 6th - early 7th century Byzantine church, measuring 21 x 12.5 m., were uncovered. It stood on a 2 m.-high podium and was part of a large monastic complex, of which not much has been exposed. The walls of the church - only 2-3 courses remain today - were constructed of well-trimmed stones covered with white plaster.

This basilical church faced east. At its entrance was a narthex paved in stone, from which three openings led to the prayer hall, divided by two rows of five columns into a nave and two aisles. The columns supported balconies above the aisles, which were protected by a stone balustrade, fragments of which have been found. The roof was made of wooden beams, as evidenced by the many, large iron nails found in the debris. Also uncovered was the hexagonal base of a freestanding ambo (pulpit), next to a column in the northern row. Three broad steps led to a raised bema - a square platform (5 x 5 m.) in the eastern part of the church, opposite a row of columns. On the platform stood the altar, of which only the foundations remain. Originally, it was built of stone and faced with

marble. In the thick eastern wall of the church, beyond the platform, was an apse and small rooms (3.5 x 3.5 m.) on both sides of it. They probably served for storage of cultic objects; their floors had hexagonal depressions lined with marble, obviously reliquaries - containers for sacred relics.

## The Mosaics

The two aisles were paved with stone tiles; the rest of the church with elaborate, beautifully preserved mosaics in a variety of colors, as well as inscriptions.

*The nave.* The rectangular carpet of the nave has particularly rich motifs. It is surrounded by a frame with three bands: the two outer bands are decorated with lotus flowers, the inner band with a geometric design. The carpet inside the frame has 55 medallions arranged in 5 rows of 11, covering the length of the nave. The medallions are created by vines with leaves and clusters of grapes that emanate from an amphora at the western edge of the carpet, at the entrance to the church. Two lions, on either side of the amphora, face each other. The spaces between the medallions are filled with birds: a partridge, a hoopoe, a dove and a quail. Human figures, animals and objects are depicted in the medallions, the figures in the rows to the right and left facing the central row. The mosaic is of high artistic quality: the figures are depicted realistically and in motion, and the clothing in great detail. Among the human figures are a nursing woman, a man playing an oboe, a man leaning on a cane, a man leading an elephant on which a dark-skinned man rides, and men leading a giraffe, a donkey and a laden camel. The animals include a goat, a partridge, a lioness, a bull, a pair of doves in a dovecote, a dog chasing a fox, another chasing a rabbit, a bird in a cage, a bear, a duck, a leopard hunting a deer, a wolf hunting an ibex, a puppy, a snake fighting a marten and a peacock. The objects include a basket of fruit and one of grapes. Between the nave and the bema, in frames composed of a meander of circles and rhomboids, are two inscriptions.

*The bema.* The carpet decorating the bema is unique in its beauty, with blue, green and brown glass elements. It consists of two frames and a five-line inscription in front of the altar. The outer frame is a chain composed of alternating round and square links. The inner frame is made of 22 medallions containing a variety of geometric meanders.

A rectangular room with a semi-circular baptismal font made of plastered stones (which had been faced with marble) was found south of the church;

leading to the bottom of the basin were four broad steps. The baptismal font was surrounded by mosaics in geometric designs, including a cross and an inscription. In front of the basin is a square mosaic carpet with rows of heart-shaped leaves, surrounded by a belt of interlocking geometric forms.

## The Inscriptions

Ten Greek inscriptions are incorporated in the floor of the church, most of them dedicatory. The names of male and female donors appear in the inscriptions, among them names of Arabs, attesting to the conversion of local nomads to Christianity. The name Stephanos, who built the church and dedicated it to St. Stephanos (regarded as the first martyr), appears in several of them.

A dedicatory inscription of geographic-historical significance was discovered in the baptisterium; it mentions the donors and includes the name of the region - Gerar.

The excavation at Horvat Be'er Shema was conducted in 1989-1990 by D. Gazit and Y. Lender on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Be'er Sheva: Prehistoric Dwelling Sites

Remains of several Chalcolithic settlements dating to the 4th millennium BCE were uncovered a short distance from one another along both sides of Nahal Be'er Sheva, in an area which is today within the city limits of Be'er Sheva. Excavation of these sites was conducted in 1951-1960 at Be'er Matar, Be'er Safad and Horvat Batar. Near the latter, an additional site, Neve Noy, was excavated in 1982.

The uniqueness of these sites is that each consisted of up to 10 units of subterranean dwellings, dug into the soft loess deposits on the banks of Nahal Be'er Sheva. The sites became well known for the many special finds associated with them and this local culture came to be known as the Be'er Sheva Chalcolithic Culture.

The standard dwelling unit consisted of round or ovoid chambers dug below ground level, measuring ca. 7 x 3 m. They were accessible via inclined tunnels dug from shallow pits on the surface, which measured ca. 3 m. in diameter. These pits, in the view of the excavators, also served as courtyards in which daily activities took place, since they contained a variety of bell-shaped silos, basins and hearths. In the subterranean chambers, with niches of various sizes cut into the walls, storage facilities were found. There were also several small, subterranean rooms, elliptical in shape and connected by galleries. The main entrance to these was via a shaft dug to a depth of several meters below the surface. Small niches cut into its sides served as hand and footholds for those going down and climbing up. Because of the constant danger of collapse, stone supports were constructed in some of the rooms to strengthen the sides, and wooden shafts to support the roof.

A large number of varied objects, in many materials, was found at the Nahal Be'er Sheva sites, indicating an advanced material culture. The pottery in this period is still rather primitive. It is handmade of local, light colored clay containing much sand, and the vessels are of simple form, sometimes with red line decorations. Many stone tools were found, including large chisels and axes made from pebbles; also finer flint tools, such as scrapers, borers, knives, sickle blades and a few arrow and lance heads.

The basalt stoneware is of interest, as the material was brought from a considerable distance. Notable are conical bowls with flat bases of exceptionally high quality. Their sides were smoothed and herringbone designs incised on them. Copper artifacts, for every day use such as axes, chisels and awls, were made by the inhabitants themselves. The copper ores were probably imported from Edom in Transjordan; rock anvils for crushing the ores, and fireplaces with slag indicate that metallurgical activities were conducted at the sites.

The most famous finds from the Chalcolithic Be'er Sheva Culture are ivory figurines. Evidence from a local workshop suggests that they were made locally, of imported raw material. Among the figurines are some of over 30 cm. in height; the craftsmanship is impressive with attention paid to anatomical details. Some of the figurines are peculiarly elongated and thin, with arms extended downward along the body; numerous holes drilled in the cheeks and chin of the faces indicate that hair was inserted to resemble facial hair.

Archeologists believe that the subterranean dwellings were a partial answer to the high temperatures prevailing in the Be'er Sheva Valley. The population consisted of several extended families, semi-nomadic, engaged in fledgling agriculture and domestication of animals, a lifestyle which made permanent settlement possible.

The finds show that cereals (wheat and barley) and pulses were important ingredients of their diet. Surpluses of food were stored in the silos of the subterranean dwellings. Goats and sheep were raised, as evidenced by the bones found, but hunted game played only a minor role in the diet.

It is assumed that the flocks were led in the summer months in search of grazing lands and returned to the dwelling sites at the onset of winter. During these migrations, the inhabitants sealed the entrances to their dwellings with earth and stones, leaving the implements not used during

the wanderings. Clearly, some never returned and thus, some of the rooms remained blocked; others filled with silt or were buried by collapse.

Excavations: 1951-1960 – J. Perrot on behalf of the French Archaeological Mission in Israel; 1952-1954 – M. Dothan on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities (today, the Israel Antiquities Authority); 1982 – I. Eldar and Y. Baumgarten on behalf of the Archeological Survey of Israel.

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### Beersheba — the Southern Border of the Kingdom of Judah

Tel Sheva, the mound of biblical Beersheba, is located in the northern Negev, several kilometers east of the present-day city of Be'er Sheva. The Arabic name of the mound, *Tell es-Sab'a*, preserves the biblical name; the archeological finds support its identification with biblical Beersheba.

The ancient town was built on a low hill on the bank of a *wadi* (dry river-bed), which carries floodwater during the winter months. A close-to-the-surface aquifer along the wadi ensured the year-round supply of water.

Beersheba is first mentioned in the biblical account of God's revelation to the patriarchs (Gen. 26:23-25; 46:1) and its name is derived from the Hebrew word *shevu'a* (oath) or *shiv'a* (seven) as elaborated in Gen. 21:31 and 26:33. Beersheba symbolized the southern boundary of the Land of Israel, as in the phrase *from Dan to Beersheba*. (Judges 20:1; 1 Samuel 3:20; and 1 Kings 5:5)

A large area of the site was excavated between 1969 and 1976, producing several layers of the remains of settlement, including fortified towns of the early Israelite period and the monarchic period of Judah, covered by remnants of small fortresses dated from the Persian to the Roman periods.

The earliest remains of settlement at Beersheba are a number of rock-hewn dwellings (12th-11th centuries BCE) and a 20 m.-deep well supplying fresh water to the inhabitants of the first permanent unfortified settlement of Israelites of the Tribe of Simon. (Joshua 19:2)

By the end of the 11th century BCE, a fortified settlement was established at Beersheba with the houses built close to one another on the hill's

summit, forming an outer, circular defensive wall with only a narrow opening for a gate. The houses opened inwards, towards a central square, where livestock was kept.

In the mid-10th century BCE, during the monarchic period, the first large fortified city was established at Beersheba, to serve as the administrative center of the southern region of the kingdom. Its area extended over some 10 dunams (2.8 acres) of the hill's summit. It was a planned city, fortified by a solid wall of mudbrick on stone foundations. The city gate, with a four-chambered gatehouse, is typical of Israelite military architecture of that period. The plan of this city, on broad lines, was preserved throughout the next 300 years, during which time it was rebuilt several times.

In the 9th century BCE, a new city wall was erected on the remains of the previous one. The new casemate wall was composed of two parallel walls with a narrow space between them which was divided into small rooms, creating living and storage spaces within the wall.

The uppermost layer of the mound revealed the 8th century BCE city of Beersheba, a remarkable example of provincial town planning and indicative of the importance of the city for the defense of the southern border of the Kingdom of Judah at the end of the monarchic period. The area of the walled city was divided into quarters; peripheral, circular streets followed the course of the city wall and a main street cut through the center of the town; and all the streets met at the square inside its gate. A planned drainage system was constructed beneath the streets to collect rainwater into a central channel, which carried it under the city gate and outside into the well. An impressive water system was also constructed in the northeast of the city, within the wall, with a stone staircase leading down to a water chamber cut deep into the rock. This sophisticated system assured a regular water supply even in times of long siege.

In the eastern part of the city stood a complex of three pillared structures covering an area of 600 m<sup>2</sup>. This served as the city's storehouse, as is evident from its ground-plan, its location near the city gate and from the hundreds of pottery vessels, including many large storage jars, found there. Next to the city gate also stood the governor's palace, with many rooms and three large reception halls. Most of the dozens of houses in the city were built uniformly, with four rooms, one of which served as a courtyard. They were located along the streets and, in the houses abutting the city wall, one room was built into the narrow space in the casemate walls.

The population of Beersheba in the 8th century BCE is estimated at 400-500, including officials and soldiers of the army of Judah stationed in Beersheba, the regional capital of the south.

A large horned altar was uncovered at the site. It was reconstructed with several well-dressed stones found in secondary use in the walls of a later building. This altar attests to the existence of a temple or cult center in the city which was probably dismantled during the reforms of King Hezekiah. (1 Kings 18:4)

The city of Beer-sheba was destroyed by King Sennacherib of Assyria, during his campaign against Judah in 701 BCE. During the 7th century BCE a small settlement existed on the site, its poor and sparse construction indicative of royal neglect; it came to an end when the Babylonians conquered the Kingdom of Judah in 587-6 BCE.

\*The site was excavated by Y. Aharoni and the last season by Z. Herzog, on behalf of Tel Aviv University.

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## Beit Alpha

The ancient [synagogue](#) of Beit Alpha is located in the Beit She'an Valley, in the north-east of the country. The nearby ruins of Khirbet Beit Ilfa preserve the ancient name.

The mosaic floor of the synagogue was discovered in 1929, when members of Kibbutz Beit Alpha dug irrigation channels for their fields. Excavations were carried out the same year, exposing mosaics preserved intact for almost 1,500 years. Later excavations, in the early 1960s, exposed remains of some houses, indicating that the synagogue had stood in a Jewish village of the [Byzantine](#) period (5th-6th centuries).

The synagogue is oriented southwards, toward [Jerusalem](#). It measures 20 x 14 m. and consists of a courtyard (atrium), a vestibule (narthex) and a prayer hall. The walls are of undressed stone, with plastered inner and outer faces.

The courtyard is reached from the street, via an opening in its western wall. It measures 10 x 7 m. and is paved with mosaics in geometric designs.

The 2.5 m.-wide vestibule has two doors in its northern wall facing the courtyard and three doorways in its southern wall providing access to the prayer hall. Its mosaic floor is also in geometric patterns.

The prayer hall measures 10 x 8 m. and is divided by two rows of stone-built pillars into a central nave and two side aisles. The pillars probably supported the arches and the gabled roof of the synagogue. Scholars

assume that there was a second storey above the two aisles and the vestibule, serving as a women's gallery. Benches were built along the long walls and along the southern wall of the prayer hall. A door in the western wall led into a side room.

An apse, a rounded raised recess 2.4 m. deep, was built into the southern wall of the synagogue and served as a bema on which the Torah [Ark](#) stood, with three steps leading up to it. At a later time, another bema in the shape of a bench was added between the two southern pillars on the eastern side of the prayer hall. A one meter-deep depression lined with stones below the floor of the bema probably served as the synagogue's treasury. When opened during the excavations it contained thirty-six Byzantine bronze coins.

### **The mosaic floor of the prayer hall**

The entire prayer hall is paved in mosaic. The floor of the western aisle is decorated with squares in geometric patterns; the eastern aisle is entirely paved in undecorated white mosaic.

Two dedicatory inscriptions, one in Aramaic and one in Greek, are situated just inside the main entrance to the prayer hall, flanked by a lion and a bull facing each other. The Aramaic inscription states that the mosaic floor was laid during the reign of Emperor Justin (probably Justin I, beginning of the 6th century) and that the cost was covered by donations from members of the community. The Greek inscription reads: May the craftsmen who carried out this work, Marianos and his son Hanina, be held in remembrance.

The colorful mosaic floor of the nave is divided into three distinct panels, all enclosed by a decorated band with a variety of motifs: geometric patterns, fruit, birds and animals. The panels depict, from north to south:

**The binding of Isaac** as described in [Genesis 22:1-19](#). On the right is an altar with flames rising from it. [Abraham](#) stands next to it, one hand holding his son [Isaac](#) and the other a long knife. The names of Abraham and Isaac are inscribed above the figures. A hand emerges from a cloud above Abraham and Isaac, symbolizing the angel of God. Nearby are the Hebrew words meaning "lay not your hand [upon the lad]". The ram and the two servants with the donkey are depicted behind Abraham.





**The Zodiac** appears in the central panel. These astrological signs, though condemned by the prophets, were widely used as decorative elements in both churches and synagogues of the Byzantine period. The twelve signs are arranged in a circle and accompanied by their Hebrew names. In the center of the zodiac, the sun god Helios is represented seated in a chariot drawn by four horses. The four seasons appear in the corners of the panel in the form of busts of winged women wearing jewels; they are inscribed with the Hebrew months initiating each season: Nisan (spring), Tamuz (summer), Tishri (autumn) and Tevet (winter).



**The Torah Ark** is depicted in the rear panel in front of the apse, with a gabled roof and behind a curtain. On either side of the [ark](#) is a lit [menorah](#) (candelabrum), and traditional Jewish ritual objects: [shofar](#) (ram's horn), lulav (palm branch), ethrog (citron) and incense shovel. The ark is protected on both sides by heraldic lions.

The splendid mosaic floor of the ancient synagogue of Beit Alpha is one of the finest uncovered in [Israel](#). It is unique in both motifs and workmanship. The synagogue itself was small and simply built, but its mosaics represent a folk art that is striking, very colorful and rich in motifs. The synagogue was in use during the [Byzantine](#) and the Early



[Islamic](#) periods (7th-8th centuries).

The remains of the synagogue and its mosaic floors have been preserved in a new, covered structure which is open to visitors.

*The excavations were directed by E.L. Sukenik assisted by N. Avigad on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.*

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#). Photos courtesy of [Jack Hazut](#).

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## Beit Govrin - A Roman Amphitheater

by Hillel Geva

The remains of a Roman amphitheater at Beit Govrin (known in the [Roman period](#) as Eleutheropolis) in the Judean flatlands southwest of [Jerusalem](#), were uncovered in the mid-1990s. The amphitheater was built in the 2nd century, on the northwestern outskirts of the then city of Beit Govrin. It is an elliptical structure (71 x 56 m.), built of large, rectangular limestone ashlar. It had a walled arena of packed earth, with subterranean galleries. The arena was surrounded by a series of connected barrel vaults, which formed a long, circular corridor and supported the stone seats above it; staircases led from the outside and from the circular corridor to the tribunes.

A vaulted room (3.8 x 3.2 m.) beneath the western tribune probably served for cultic purposes (sacellum). It contained two votive incense altars, one bearing a Greek dedicatory inscription, and over a hundred oil lamps.

This amphitheater, in which gladiatorial contests took place, could seat about 3,500 spectators. It was built for the Roman troops stationed in the region after the suppression of the [Bar Kochba rebellion](#) (132 - 135) and was in use until destroyed by earthquake in 363. It is located in the national park of Beit Govrin, has been partially restored and is open to the public.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the *New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* and editor of *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*.

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**Beit She'an**[The Earliest Settlements](#)[Egyptian Administration Center](#)[The Canaanite City](#)[The Israelite City](#)[SCYTHOPOLIS](#)[The Hellenistic Period](#)[The Roman Period](#)[The Byzantine Period](#)[Remains from the Roman-Byzantine Periods](#)[Beit She'an - Scythopolis in later periods](#)

Ancient [Beit She'an](#), located in the Jordan Valley some 30 km. south of Lake Kinneret ([Sea of Galilee](#)), was of strategic importance because here the road from [Jerusalem](#) northwards met the road from the northern coast eastwards to [Transjordan](#). This strategic position in the fertile Beit She'an valley made it one of the major cities in the Land of Israel.

Between 1921 and 1933, major archeological excavations were conducted on the ten acres of Tel Beit She'an (in Arabic: Tel el-Husn - "Hill of the Fortress"). Remains from the [Roman-Byzantine](#) period were exposed on the top of the tel (mound) and in its southern part, those of earlier periods: the Bronze and Iron Ages. In the course of the excavations remains of 20 strata/settlements were exposed, which date from the Neolithic/Chalcolithic periods (5th-4th millennia BCE) to the [Byzantine](#) period (7th century CE). Excavations on the tel were renewed in 1983, and again between 1989-1996, uncovering more remains of the early cities. From the early 1980s until the present, large-scale excavations have been carried out in the city center of the [Hellenistic](#) and [Roman-Byzantine](#) periods.

In the Hellenistic period, Beit She'an was renamed Scythopolis (city of the Scythians) and grew, extending southeast to Tel Itztaba. The city reached its maximum size and prosperity during the Roman- Byzantine period, when a new civic center was built in the valley southwest of the tel, surrounded by residential quarters; in the Byzantine period it was also fortified with a city wall.

In the Early Arab period, Beit She'an-Scythopolis declined; it was destroyed by earthquake in 749. A small fortress was built by the Crusaders in the 12th century, to control the crossroads and to guard against [Muslim](#) penetration of their kingdom, but the city was never rebuilt. Only a small Arab village existed there in later periods.



## BEIT SHE'AN

### The Earliest Settlements

Due to the limited area excavated, little is known about Beit She'an in its earliest periods. However, it is clear from a deposit several meters high, that there was continuous, intensive settlement. The earliest inhabitants, of the Chalcolithic period, lived in caves cut into the rock of the hill. Apical dwellings, built of flat clay bricks, appeared at the beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE.

Evidence of a large Bronze Age (3rd millenium BCE) town was exposed. This town extended to the hill east of the tel and its residents lived in multi-roomed broadhouses. One of the buildings was a fine brick structure, roofed with reeds covered by plaster and included a large hall, its walls over one meter thick. This building was either a public storehouse or a granary; it was destroyed by fire, leaving burnt wooden beams and a large quantity of charred grain and pulses. High-quality pottery vessels decorated in black and red were found among local, inferior ware. This led the excavators to surmise that immigrants from northeastern Anatolia and the Caspian region had settled in Beit She'an.

During the Middle Bronze Age (first half of the 2nd millennium BCE), Beit She'an declined into a town of minor significance. In the 16th century BCE, a temple was built of mud bricks covered with smoothed white plaster. It consisted of three parts: an entrance hall, a main hall (*heikhal*), and an inner room (*dvir*).

### Chronological Table

#### BEIT SHE'AN

First settlements	Chalcolithic period	4th millennium BCE
Large town	Early Bronze Age	3rd millennium BCE
Small town	Middle Bronze Age	1st half of 2nd millennium BCE
Egyptian Administration Center	Late Bronze Age	15th - 12th centuries BCE
Canaanite city	Iron Age	12th - 11th centuries BCE
Israelite city	Iron Age	10th century - 732 BCE

#### SCYTHOPOLIS

Large, wealthy city	Hellenistic Period	3rd-2ndcenturies BCE
Planned city, with civic center	Roman Period	1st century BCE - 3rd CE
Expanded city with wall	Byzantine Period	4th - 7th centuries
City declined, destroyed earthquake (749), small settlement	Early Islamic Period	7th-10th centuries

#### LATER PERIODS

Small fortress	Crusader Period	12th century
Village	Late Islamic Period	13th-19th centuries

### Egyptian Administration Center

During the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age (15th-12th centuries BCE), Beit She'an was an important city and served, as did [Megiddo](#), as a center of Egyptian imperial administration in northern [Canaan](#). The city is frequently mentioned



in royal Egyptian documents and inscriptions from the reign of the pharaohs of the New Kingdom. The Egyptian administrative center inside the walled city included a governor's residence, government buildings, a royal granary, and a residential quarter for the families of the Egyptian officials. Egyptian finds, including royal steles, attest to the importance of the city as a center of the Egyptian administration.

Royal buildings in Beit She'an included a succession of temples. These temple complexes combine Canaanite construction with Egyptian architectural elements, typical of the monumental buildings in [Egypt](#) proper. The first temple complex in Beit She'an was built during the reign of Thutmose III at the beginning of the 15th century BCE. It consisted of a large courtyard, in part surrounded by halls and rooms in which dozens of Egyptian pottery vessels, brought as ritual offerings, were found. The temple was modified in the 14th century BCE to include a large courtyard with an altar. The temple itself, which consisted of a hall with an altar and an interior room with a small cell behind it, stood at the eastern side of the courtyard. In this temple a stone stele was found, depicting, in Egyptian style, figures standing opposite a seated god, probably the Canaanite god Mekal. The inscription on the stele states that it was dedicated by the Egyptian scribe Pa-re-em-heb to the memory of his father, Mem-ep. Towards the end of the 14th century BCE, a new temple with only a few changes, was built in Beit She'an, and remained in use until the 12th century BCE. It consisted of a large hall with benches for offerings along the walls, its ceiling resting on two wooden columns, which stood on stone bases. Stairs in the rear of the hall led to a long, narrow dvir, 1.5 m. higher than the hall, with a bema against its back wall.

During this period, a fortified governor's residence was built in Beit She'an. This brick building (23 x 22 m.) had thick walls. In its central hall, surrounded on all four sides by rooms, two wooden columns on stone bases supported the ceiling. Nearby, on both sides of a street, were large dwellings for Egyptian officials. Architectural elements, such as door lintels and doorposts, with dedicatory inscription and solemn oaths were found, as well as Egyptian-style luxury items, such as pottery objects and jewellery.

Several basalt steles in royal Egyptian style, dating from the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 12th century BCE, were found in secondary use in Canaanite temples of the 11th century BCE. Two steles from the reign of Pharaoh Seti I include his names and titles. The "Large Stele", the most impressive find from the period of Egyptian rule of Canaan, describes the victory over the Canaanite cities, which had rebelled against Egypt and mentions them by name, including Beit She'an. The "Small Stele" describes the pharaoh's victory over tribes living in the hill region near the city; among them the Apiru (the name of the biblical Hebrews in Egyptian documents). Another stele, from the reign of Pharaoh Ramses II, lists the tof the king and his deeds in defense of the weak.

On a hill north of the tel, the remains of a cemetery from the period of Egyptian rule were uncovered. Dozens of anthropomorphic clay sarcophagi, their lids with naturalistic reliefs of the deceaseds' faces, were found in the graves. The headdresses are similar to those of [Philistine](#) warriors depicted in Egyptian temple reliefs from the reign of Ramses III. Scholars assume that Philistine officials or soldiers, who served as mercenaries in the Egyptian garrison at Beit She'an, were buried in these sarcophagi.

Egyptian rule in Beit She'an came to an end in the mid-12th century BCE, when the city was destroyed by fire. The decline of Egyptian control over Canaan caused political unrest, and both the Sea Peoples (to whom the Philistines were related) and the Israelite tribes penetrated the region in this period.

## The Canaanite City

The [Bible](#) mentions Beit She'an as one of the [Canaanite](#) cities which was not conquered by the Israelites under [Joshua](#). ([Joshua 17:1](#) 1-12; [Judges 1:27](#)) The city is again mentioned after the defeat of the Israelite army of [King Saul](#) by the Philistines on Mt. Gilboa (south of the city), when they impaled the bodies of King Saul and his sons on the walls of Beit She'an. ([I Samuel 31:10-12](#))

At the end of the 12th, and during the 11th century BCE, Beit She'an was an important Canaanite city with a mixed population: Canaanites and descendants of Egyptians and Philistines. During this period, a pair of temples was built on the ruins of the earlier Egyptian temple. The southern temple had a long central hall in which two rows of three columns supported the roof, and a number of rooms on both sides. The northern temple was rectangular, and its roof was supported by four columns. The Egyptian stela, described above, were found here in secondary use. Finds from these Canaanite temples also include several ceramic cultic stands. These tall stands were made in imitation of multi-storied buildings, with plastic anthropomorphic and zoomorphic decorations, including snakes and birds. This Canaanite city was burned to the ground at the beginning of the 10th century BCE, probably when conquered by [King David](#).

## The Israelite City

Beit She'an is mentioned as an important city in the fifth administrative district of [King Solomon](#). ([I Kings 4:12](#)) From this period, administrative buildings, one of them a large structure with numerous rooms that undoubtedly served as the regional administrative center, were uncovered. This city was destroyed to its foundations by Tiglath Pileser III of [Assyria](#), when he conquered the Kingdom of Israel in 732 BCE.

## SCYTHOPOLIS

During the [Hellenistic](#), [Roman](#) and [Byzantine](#) periods, Beit She'an became known as Scythopolis ("City of the Scythians", probably mercenaries who, as veterans, settled there). According to tradition the city was founded by Dionysos, and his nursemaid Nysa was buried there; it was known also as Nysa-Scythopolis.

Excavations were carried out mainly in the valley south and southwest of the tel. There, the main streets and public buildings of the urban center of Roman-Byzantine Scythopolis were uncovered and, south of it, the remains of the theater and the amphitheater.



## The Hellenistic Period

Beit She'an is mentioned in written sources of the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE describing the conflict between the Ptolemids and the Seleucids (inheritors of the empire of [Alexander the Great](#)) over control of the Land of Israel, and with reference to the wars of the [Hasmoneans](#) to gain independence from Seleucid rule.

At the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the town was located on top of the tel only. During Seleucid rule (2nd century BCE), it was accorded the status of polis (Greek, city). At this time, the town encompassed tel Iztaba (north of the tel) where remains of a residential area of the period were uncovered. The houses had brick walls on stone foundations, with rooms around a stone-paved courtyard; the walls were covered with frescos and stucco imitating ashlar construction. The remains of a large public building with massive, one meter-thick walls of trimmed stones plastered to look like paneling (stucco), were also exposed.

Scythopolis was conquered and destroyed by the Hasmoneans at the end of the 2nd century BCE. A fierce conflagration left ceramic vessels and other utensils covered in a thick layer of ash. Among the finds were many imported pottery vessels, including dozens of wine amphorae from the Greek islands (especially from Rhodes) with seal impressions on the handles.

## The Roman Period

In 63 BCE, the [Roman](#) general and triumvir Pompey effectively established Roman rule in Judea, and Scythopolis played a central role in the administration of the area. Granted special privileges, Scythopolis began the count of years from its attaining the status of a Roman polis. It was the largest city of the Decapolis, a league of ten hellinized cities, nine of them east of the Jordan River. Public construction in the new urban center of Scythopolis in the valley southwest of the tel, was begun in the 1st century CE. But very little is known about the buildings of that period, since they were destroyed or incorporated into the massive construction work of the following period.

During the reign of the emperors Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius in the 2nd century (the period of Pax Romana), the empire enjoyed peace, security and economic prosperity, as evidenced in extensive and elaborate construction projects in the Roman cities. Scythopolis was an outstanding example of this high-level urban planning and construction. Impressive,



freestanding gateways were built to mark the boundaries of the urban area. In the valley southwest of the tel, a new civic center was created. Along its colonnaded, main streets stood the temple, the basilica, the nymphaeum (fountain) and the bathhouses. To the south of them were the large entertainment complexes: the theater and the amphitheater. The ancient tel now served as the acropolis and the main temple of the city stood there. From Mt. Gilboa, 7 km. southwest of the city, water was carried to the city via aqueduct.

The buildings, as well as the street pavements were of dark basalt stone, characteristic of the region. The public buildings were faced with hard limestone brought from Mt. Gilboa, as were architectural elements, such as columns and carved components. Several buildings were splendidly decorated with granite columns and sculpted elements in imported marble. The public buildings were funded by the Roman administration and by private donors. Inscriptions honoring benefactors of the city, including Roman emperors and governors, were found in the ruins.

Many of the buildings of Scythopolis were damaged in the earthquake of 363. In 409, the city was designated the metropolis (provincial capital) of Palaestina Secunda, which included the Galilee and northern Transjordan. The city's population continued to grow with its administrative and economic importance, and its new status also led to massive repair-work of the damage caused by the earthquake, as well as to restoration and rebuilding.

## The Byzantine Period

During this period (4th-7th centuries), the urban center of Scythopolis underwent machanges. The pagan temple in the center of the city was destroyed, yet the nymphaeum and the eastern baths were restored, and a large new bathhouse was built in the south. The basilica was turned into a large agora (square). Some of the streets were improved with mosaic-paved stoas, others were narrowed, with new shops built along them. Many dedicatory inscriptions found in the restored buildings are evidence of the involvement of the provincial administration in these projects; private philanthropists seem to have preferred donating their money for the building of churches and [synagogues](#).



During the 4th and 5th centuries the urban area of Scythopolis grew and spread over the plateau around the civic center. Remains of elaborate villas with colorful mosaics, such as the one known as the House of Leontius, were found in the western part of the city. The population was primarily Christian, as attested to by the large number of churches; but remains of a Jewish and a Samaritan synagogue also attest to established communities of these minorities. During this period, Scythopolis was fortified with a city wall, which incorporated the gateways of the Roman city. The 2.5 m.-thick wall was about 4.5 km. long, with many square towers. It surrounded the entire 400 acres of the city, including the amphitheater and the residential neighborhoods.

In the 6th century, with a population of some 40,000, Scythopolis reached its greatest size and residential areas and churches were also built outside the city wall. Population density, preference for more functional construction and the decline of the imperial and provincial administration led to poor maintenance of the luxurious Roman buildings and to a general deterioration of the city towards the end of the Byzantine period.

## Remains from the Roman-Byzantine Periods

### Colonnaded Streets

Several colonnaded streets, along which the public buildings of Roman Scythopolis stood, crossed the civic center at the foot of the tel. The width of the streets was about 24 m.; on both sides of the unroofed thoroughfare stood two rows of columns, which supported roofs covering elevated sidewalks lined with shops. The streets were restored in the [Byzantine](#) period and mosaic inscriptions with the names of those responsible for the renovation were found (these names were adopted by the excavators as street names, as in the following).

Sylvanus Street crossed the city from north to south along the western side of the tel. South of it stood an elaborate, 56 m.-long colonnade, its facade with a row of 7 m.-high columns behind a reflecting pool. Valley Street branched off from Sylvanus Street. This colonnaded street, with 5 m.-high columns, was exposed for a length of 150 m.; it continued for several hundred meters to Nahal Harod, over which a 37 m.-long stone bridge was built, supported by three massive piers from which sprung two great arches. At the northern end of the street was a monumental gateway with a 7 m.-wide opening and a vaulted roof. It served those entering the city from the north, along Valley Street to the city's center. The gate was incorporated into the city wall in the Byzantine period.



Palladius Street, another colonnaded street, extended from the theater northward for 150 m. to Sylvanus Street, at the foot of the tel. The western colonnade of the street was repaved in the 4th century, according to a mosaic inscription, during the governorship of

Palladius son of Porfirius. At the center of this colonnade was the Sigma Plaza (a semi-circular plaza in the form of the Greek letter sigma), which according to a mosaic inscription, was built in the beginning of the 6th century. It served as a center for entertainment, as well as for commerce. Sigma Plaza was paved with stone slabs and the 12 rooms around it with colorful mosaics patterns. The floor of one room had a round frame with a portrait of Tyche, the patron goddess of Scythopolis. The crown on her head is in the form of a city wall with towers, and in her hands she holds a cornucopia filled with fruit and a palm tree.

The intersection of the colonnaded streets of the civic center of Roman Scythopolis, near the southwestern corner of the tel, was marked by a great, 15 m.-high monument. It consisted of a trapezoidal platform (ca. 14 x 12 m.) on which columns with Corinthian capitals supported arches and a decorated frieze.

## The Acropolis

At the northern end of Palladius Street, at the foot of the tel, stood a monumental propyleum (gate structure) with three entrances. From it a staircase, the *via sacra*, (sacral way) led to the top of the tel, which was the acropolis of Scythopolis. An altar, with dedications to Zeus Akraios (Zeus of the Heights - the acropolis) was found at the foot of the tel, indicating that a temple to Zeus, overlooking the city, had once stood atop it. During the [Byzantine](#) period, the temple was removed and a church built in its place.

## The Basilica

The central civil basilica of Scythopolis, 70 m. long and 30 m. wide, was located west of the intersection of the main streets. Rows of columns with Ionic capitals created roofed aisles on four sides of an open courtyard. The basilica served as the commercial center of the city and legal and public affairs were also conducted there.

A large agora (square) replaced the Basilica during the Byzantine period. As it was located between existing Roman buildings, its shape was irregular; it was completely enclosed by colonnades. The agora played a central role in the commercial life of Byzantine Scythopolis.

## The Nymphaeum

This public fountain, located on Sylvanus Street next to the monument, was a very elaborate building with a semi-circular facade - an apse facing the street, with niches for statues. On podiums flanking the structure stood two pairs of large fluted columns. Water from the aqueduct was fed into the back of the nymphaeum, and piped through openings in its facade into a small pool.

## The Temple

A Roman temple stood at the intersection of Sylvanus and Palladius streets, probably



dedicated to the cult of Dionysus, the traditional patron god and founder of the city. It apparently also served the cult of Nysa, the nursemaid of Dionysius, who was also regarded as a goddess. The temple was built on a 20m-high podium supported on a series of arches. It was reached by a wide staircase from the plaza. In the facade was a pronaos (front hall) with four enormous limestone columns on bases, each weighing 25 tons. These columns supported a decorated gable. A pedestal found in the plaza in front of the temple bears an inscription in Greek with the name of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161 - 180) which begins: With good fortune. The residents of the city of Nysa Scythopolis... The temple was largely destroyed by the Christians in the 4th century, but its beautiful facade remained standing.

## The Eastern Bathhouse

Located on Sylvanus Street east of the Basilica, it included a square hall (20 x 20 m.) that served as the frigidarium (cold room) of the bathhouse. The room's wall and floor were covered with marble slabs. In one of its walls was a fountain and in the other walls were niches for statues. Fragments of statues, probably smashed in the Byzantine period, were found in a pit below the bathhouse; they are those of a life-sized young Dionysus, a nude Aphrodite, an emperor wearing armor and an Athena.

The main part of the bathhouse contained rooms and halls, including a caldarium heated by a hypocaust. A large latrine, with a colonnaded courtyard, had rows of evenly spaced stone toilet seats along its walls, and drainage channels beneath them.

## The Theater

The monumental theater of Scythopolis stands at the southern end of Palladius Street and is the best preserved building from Roman times. Performances consisted mainly of light entertainment such as acrobatics, impersonations and sports competitions, though plays were also presented.

The theater, 110 m. in diameter, was built on a hillside, its rear wall partly cut into bedrock. Its facade towards the tel, where the Temple of Zeus stood, was surrounded by plazas. The theater had 7,000 seats made of limestone, in three blocks. Only the lower tier of seats, consisting of 13 rows including the lowest one reserved for dignitaries, remained complete. There were nine radial staircases, but only the core of the middle block remained, as the limestone seats had been removed at a later time. A row of large pilasters around the outside of the structure indicates that there existed an upper block of seating, of which nothing remains today. Eight arched passageways led the spectators into the theater. The semicircular orchestra area was paved with marble; it was reached via arched passageways that ran under the blocks of seating. The raised stage, also paved in marble was built on a row of arches. The scenae frons, the architectural backdrop to the stage, was 21 m. high. The side facing the seats consisted of niches that held statues, and a row of alternating black and red granite columns supporting decorated friezes. Along a corridor, behind the scenae frons, were cubicles for the use of the performers and stagehands. Three openings in the northern wall of this corridor provided direct access from Palladius Street.

## The Amphitheater



The amphitheater was located on the plateau south of the Roman civic center. A hippodrome had been built here, of which very little is known, since the Roman amphitheater was built on its western part. The oval amphitheater (102 x 67 m.) encloses an arena 82 m. long and 47 m. wide. The arena was surrounded by a 3.2 m.-high wall, with 10-12 rows of seats, for 5,000-

7,000 spectators. Only three rows of seats were preserved. At the center of the seating-block on the north side was a platform for dignitaries, an orchestra and the game organizers. On the western and eastern sides of this wall were openings for direct access to the arena; several rooms along the wall around the arena may have been cages for wild animals. Performances at the amphitheater probably included contests between gladiators, hunting of wild animals, sport competitions and more.

With Byzantine-Christian rule in the 4th century, performances in the amphitheater were forbidden. In the following centuries, dwellings, as well as industrial and commercial structures, were built on its remains and a basalt-paved street linked this suburb to the center of town. Two Greek inscriptions state that the paving was the generous gift of the Archon (title of the provincial governor) Flavius Orestes (535).

## The Western Bathhouse

Northwest of the theater, at the southern end of Palladius Street, a large bathhouse complex, 100 m. long and 90 m. wide, was constructed in the 4th century. A monumental propyleum (gateway), with columns and carved friezes connected the street to a mosaic-paved colonnade, which led to the bathhouse courtyard. The courtyard was surrounded, on three sides, by broad porticos paved with mosaic or colored marble tiles. The mosaics, according to an inscription, were replaced in 535 with marble pavement. The bathhouse itself consisted of eight halls with an open pool and fountains in front of it. At its center were large halls heated by hypocaust. Stone domes covered the halls, the floors were paved with marble slabs and the walls were decorated with paintings. The building also included two public latrines. The many inscriptions engraved in stone or incorporated in the mosaic pavements indicate renovations and changes made by the provincial governors. An outstanding addition in the 6th century was an apse built in the western portico of the courtyard; it served for public gatherings.



## A Synagogue in the House of Leontius



The House of Leontius, so named by the excavators (1964-72), was built in the Byzantine period in the western part of Scythopolis. In the excavations, only several rooms around a courtyard were exposed, including one on the southern side (7 x 7 m.), which had served as a synagogue. Its colorful mosaic floor had an outer belt decorated with flowers and birds, around medallions with animals, created by vine

trellises emerging from an amphora. The central medallion enclosed a menorah (candelabrum) beneath the word shalom (peace). Four inscriptions were found in the room: one of the two in Aramaic mentions members of the holy community who contributed to the renovation of the building; one of the two Greek inscriptions refers to Jose the innkeeper, lending credence to the idea that the synagogue was part of an inn.

Several rooms were located on the northwestern side of the building, one of them with a beautiful mosaic floor featuring scenes from the Odyssey: Odysseus bound to the mast of his ship; and struggling to resist the lure of the Sirens. A Greek inscription refers to Leontius and his brother Jonathan, who donated the mosaic floor and wished to be remembered for their deed.

## The Monastery of the Lady Mary

The Monastery, founded in 567, is located at tel Itztaba; it was excavated in the 1930s. This building, near the inner side of the city wall of Scythopolis, was named after a donor mentioned in one of the dedicatory inscriptions. The monastery included a church, and many rooms with mosaic floors. The mosaic floor of the central hall of the church has frames of different shapes and sizes in which animals, such as lions, camels, boars and ostriches are depicted. At its center is a zodiac with the Greek names of the twelve months.

## The Samaritan Synagogue

This synagogue was also located at tel Itztaba, outside the northern part of the Byzantine city wall of Scythopolis. The building was excavated in 1960. Its plan was basilical, with an apse oriented northwest, not towards [Jerusalem](#). The mosaic floor had floral and geometrical motifs, but no human or animal images. The square carpet in front of the apse depicts an aedicule (shrine) supported by columns and covered with a parochet (curtain). On both sides of the aedicule are identical presentations of cultic symbols: menorah (candelabrum), shofar (ram's horn) and incense shovel. One of the inscriptions in the mosaic floor is in Greek, but written in Samaritan script, which led to the surmise that the building was a Samaritan synagogue.

## Beit She'an - Scythopolis in later periods

Scythopolis came under [Muslim](#) control in 635 and was renamed Beisan. The city was not damaged and its Christian population lived together with the newly arrived Muslims until the 8th century, but during this period the city declined and its Roman-Byzantine architectural glory was lost to neglect. New structures were erected in the streets themselves, narrowing them to mere alleyways, and makeshift shops were opened in the colonnades. By the 8th century, the city had reached a low point; marble was removed for making lime, Palladius Street was blocked and Sigma Square was turned into a cemetery.

On 18 January 749, the town now known as Beisan, was completely destroyed by an earthquake, as documented in Jewish literary sources. Large quantities of pottery, metal and glass vessels, and jewellery, as well as gold and silver coins and a number of skeletons were found in the excavations.

In the 12th century, the [Crusaders](#) built a small fortress south of the tel, using stones removed from the buildings of ancient Scythopolis. After their defeat at the end of the century, Beisan became an Arab village, bearing no resemblance whatsoever to the monumental and elegant city it had once been.

Preservation and restoration of the remains of the civic center of Roman-Byzantine Scythopolis was undertaken in conjunction with the archeological excavations. It is again possible to walk along the colonnaded streets of the civic center, to admire the public buildings and to visit the theater, which has been partially restored and in which performances are once again presented.

The theater was excavated in the 1950s by S. Appelbaum. Excavations at Tel Beit She'an in 1983 were directed by Y. Yadin and S. Geva; those conducted from 1989 to 1996 were under the direction of A. Mazar on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

*The excavation at Tel Iztaba was directed by G. Mazor and R. Bar-Natan on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The excavation of the city center of the Roman-Byzantine period was directed by G. Mazor and R. Bar-Natan on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and by Y. Tsafir and G. Foerster on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.*

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#). Photos courtesy of [Jack Hazut](#).

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### Beit Shemesh: Biblical City on the Border Between Judah and Philistia

Tel (mound) Beit Shemesh covers about 7 acres of a low hill, near the modern town of Beit Shemesh, some 20 km. west of [Jerusalem](#). It overlooks the Sorek Valley, which widens here into a fertile valley.

The name Beit Shemesh (House of the Sun) is suggestive of the deity that was worshipped by the Canaanite inhabitants of the ancient city. Identification of the mound with biblical Beit Shemesh is based on its geographical description in the Bible, on the Onomasticon of Eusebius (4th century CE) and on the name of the Arab village Ein Shams, which preserves the ancient name.

The [Bible](#) mentions Beit Shemesh in the description of the northern border of the Tribe of Judah ([Joshua 15:10-11](#)) and as a Levitical city in the territory of Judah. ([Joshua 21:16](#)) Beit Shemesh is also mentioned in connection with the return of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines, who had captured it in the battle of Eben-Ezer. The ark was placed on a cattle-drawn cart in the Philistine town of Ekron and sent via Nahal Sorek to Beit Shemesh:

*Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beit Shemesh and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beit Shemesh. --*  
([I Samuel 6:12-13](#))

At the beginning of the 8th century BCE, Beit Shemesh became

strategically important, as it controlled the western approaches of the Kingdom of Judah, and the road to its capital, Jerusalem. It was here that the battle between Amaziyah, King of Judah and Jehoash, King of Israel, took place. ([II Kings 14:11-13](#)) Shortly thereafter, Beit Shemesh passed into Philistine control, but was restored to the Kingdom of Judah under Hezekiah. The town was destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BCE.

Talmudic sources describe Beit Shemesh as a small village; in the [Byzantine](#) period a large, fortified monastery was built on the southeastern part of the tel.

Excavations conducted at Beit Shemesh at the beginning of the 20th century and during the 1930s exposed large parts of the tel, down to bedrock. Remains of several successive cities from the Bronze and Iron ages were uncovered. But these early excavations, in part tunnels dug along the city walls, did not produce clear results. The aim of the new excavations, begun in 1990, is to shed more light on the history of ancient Beit Shemesh.

The present excavations focus on the northern and southern sides of the tel, which remained largely untouched. In the very first season, the remains of several impressive Iron Age buildings were uncovered, indicating the importance of the city. In the coming years, the expedition plans to expose the remains of the Canaanite city that preceded the Israelite one.

## **The Period of the Judges (12th-11th centuries BCE)**

Remains of a large structure, probably a public building, were uncovered on the slope of the tel. Its walls, built of large fieldstones, indicate that it had a second story. There was also a large stone-paved courtyard surrounded by many rooms. To the east of this building were many simple buildings with ceilings supported by wooden pillars on stone bases. Large grindstones and clay ovens attest to the daily activities of their inhabitants. This city was destroyed (the event is unknown) and its houses were buried under a thick layer of ash and bricks.

The pottery used by the inhabitants of Beit Shemesh during this period is in the Canaanite and Philistine tradition. But the bones of the animals they consumed attest to a diet typical of the Israelites who inhabited the hill country. Such finds indicate the cultural influences on the inhabitants of this border town; it is difficult, however, to ascertain their specific ethnic identity - Canaanite, Philistine or Israelite.



## **The Period of the United Kingdom and of the Kingdom of Judah (10th-7th centuries BCE)**

In the 10th century BCE, probably during the reign of [King Solomon](#), Beit Shemesh was rebuilt, and served as a regional administrative center of the Kingdom. The remains show evidence of considerable planning and financial investment in the buildings. The city was surrounded by massive fortifications and its water supply guaranteed by a subterranean reservoir. At the center of the densely built-up residential area was a large, well-constructed building (250 sq. m.) with several elongated halls, probably a public warehouse.

An elaborate system of fortifications, from the 10th century BCE, was discovered on the northeastern side of the tel. The main element is a tower with two very broad, perpendicular walls built of particularly large stones, each 1.5 m. long. A covered, hidden passage (postern) at the city wall, west of the tower, served as an escape route from the city. A casemate wall extending from the eastern side of the fortification is assumed to have surrounded the entire city. The massive tower was built of large stones, and projected outward. This wall, exposed during the previous excavations, was erroneously dated to the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BCE); it is now clear that it formed an integral part of the fortifications of the Israelite city.

During the 9th-early 8th century BCE, a gatehouse was built in the city wall where the Israelite fortification complex had stood. This gatehouse provided direct access to the perennial water sources in the Sorek Valley and to the road running through that valley. The gatehouse had two pairs of open chambers facing each other with a passageway between them; beneath the passageway, a water channel was built. The lower portion of the gatehouse was constructed of large stones, the superstructure of bricks. Inside the city gate was a plaza, which probably served as the center of the city's public life.

In the southern part of the site a large area used for commercial activity and for storage of goods was revealed. The buildings contained fragments of numerous pottery storage vessels destroyed in a conflagration at the beginning of the 8th century BCE.

During the 8th century BCE, the inhabitants of Beit Shemesh engaged in oil production, both for their own use and for export. Remains of oil

presses containing large stone basins in which the olives were crushed, deep stone containers for the baskets with crushed olives, and heavy stone weights that were hung on wooden beams for pressing the oil from the olives, were found in the buildings.

## The Water System

Beneath the plaza inside the city gate, the excavators found a large subterranean reservoir - a unique find - not encountered so far in any of the water systems of the biblical period.

The rock-cut reservoir is cruciform in shape (with four arms), coated with thick hydraulic plaster. The length of each of its arms is 9 m. and their width 2-4 m.; it is 6 m. high and has a capacity of 800 cu.m. From the top opening of the reservoir near the city gate, one may descend via a broad staircase, finely constructed of large stones, which makes two turns around a built pier. At the bottom is a narrow opening covered by three large and very carefully cut cigar-shaped stones. Through this opening one enters the northwestern arm of the reservoir, which was filled with rainwater collected from the plaza above (and flowed down the plastered staircase and a channel running alongside it). The channel under the city gate also emptied into the reservoir.

Beit Shemesh was destroyed by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in his campaign against Judah in 701 BCE, and abandoned. But in the 7th century BCE some Judean families returned, refurbished the reservoir and lived for a while in its vicinity. Many pottery vessels, broken while drawing water, remained imbedded in the thick layer of silt accumulated at the bottom of the reservoir. On a bench hewn in the rock inside the entrance to the reservoir, two jars and a cooking pot were found, obviously left there by the last inhabitants of Beit Shemesh.

This attempt by Judean families to settle in Beit Shemesh once more was resented by their Philistine neighbors and/or the ruling Assyrians. To ensure the abandonment of this border city, they deliberately blocked the entrance to the reservoir with 150 tons of earth and debris.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/Bet_Shemesh.html).

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### Belvoir: A Crusader Fortress Overlooking the Jordan Valley

The security of the [Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem](#) in the twelfth century was dependent upon a network of fortifications, mainly along its eastern border which was vulnerable to [Muslim](#) attacks.

The Crusader fortress of Belvoir is located on a hill of the Naphtali plateau, some 20 km. south of the Sea of Galilee and about 500 meters above the Jordan Valley. It overlooks the winding Jordan River below and faces the hills of Gilead in today's Kingdom of Jordan. Belvoir – Fair View – was aptly named by the Crusaders. In Hebrew it is known as Kohav Hayarden – Star of the Jordan – which preserves the name of Kohav, the Jewish village which existed nearby during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The Muslims called it Kaukab al-Hawa – Star of the Winds.

The first structure on the hill was modest; it was part of the feudal estate of a French nobleman named Velos who lived in Tiberias. He sold it to the Order of the Hospitalers in 1168; the Hospitalers understood the strategic importance of the site and erected a huge fortress with impenetrable defenses. From Belvoir, the garrison could closely watch the bridge over the Jordan which served as the eastern entryway from Gilead into their Kingdom, as well as the roads in the valley leading to the Galilee.

Belvoir consisted of an outer square fortress which enclosed a smaller, inner square fortress. Its walls were built of large basalt ashlar held together by U-shaped iron joints. Well-protected cisterns for the storage of rain water guaranteed the water supply in times of siege.

## The Outer Fortress

The outer square fortress measures 110 x 110 m. A huge, external tower surrounded by a low wall (a barbican) was built on the eastern side, which controlled the dead space on the slope of the hill, both visually and with fire power. The main entrance to the fortress was via an outer gateway from the southeastern corner. From here, one proceeded up a paved ramp to the top of the external tower, turned back and continued to the inner gate of the fortress. This fortified gate was closed with a wooden door covered with metal and locked from the inside with a heavy wooden beam which fit into slots in the doorposts. A secondary entrance to the fortress was from the west, via a bridge suspended over the moat, which could be raised or destroyed when the fortress came under attack.

A man-made moat, 20 m. wide and 14 m. deep, surrounded the fortress on three sides while the steep slope and the external tower protected its eastern side. The moat was dry and was meant to prevent siege engines, such as battering rams and assault towers, from coming close to the fortifications.

Huge towers rose at the four corners of the fortress, with additional towers between them at mid-point. The broad bases of the towers slope towards the bottom of the moat, to prevent tunneling under them. In the upper stories of the towers were loopholes protected by covered recesses. The placement of the towers is such that the entire circumference of the fortress walls could be covered by cross fire. Almost every tower incorporated sally ports into the moat, with narrow staircases; the steps are unusually high, undoubtedly to make enemy penetration from the outside more difficult.

In the courtyard between the walls of the outer fortress and the inner fortress were large halls covered with vaults. These served as stables, storehouses and living space and gave access to defensive positions on the roofs.

## The Inner Fortress

Inside the outer fortress and separated from it by the courtyard was the inner fortress (keep, donjon). It was a square, 50 x 50 m. structure, two stories high and surrounded by a wall with towers at the corners. This inner fortress could withstand siege even after the main, outer fortress had fallen into enemy hands. The main entrance was from the west. In its center was an open courtyard surrounded by vaulted spaces which served as refectory, kitchen, meeting hall, stores, living quarters etc. The upper story served as

the command headquarters of the fortress and included the apartments of the the knights, as well as a small chapel built of limestone and roofed with cross vaults.

The fortress of Belvoir served its purpose as a major obstacle to the [Muslims'](#) goal of invading the [Crusader Kingdom](#) from the east. It was attacked by [Muslim](#) forces in 1180 but its mighty fortifications withstood the attack.

After the victory of the Muslim army under Salah al-Din (Saladin) over the [Crusaders](#) at the battle of the Horns of Hittin, Belvoir was besieged. The siege lasted a year and a half, until the defenders surrendered on 5 January 1189.

The fortifications of Belvoir were dismantled in 1217-18 by the Muslim rulers who feared the reconquest of the fortress by the [Crusaders](#). In 1240 Belvoir was ceded to the [Crusaders](#), by agreement; lack of funds did not permit them to restore the fortifications and it returned to [Muslim](#) control a few years later.

The fortress of Belvoir remained in ruins until comprehensive excavations were conducted in 1966. The fortifications, well preserved under masses of rubble, were revealed and, upon completion of the restoration work, the site was opened to visitors. It is the most complete and impressive [Crusader](#) fortress in Israel.

The excavations were carried out under the direction of M. Ben-Dov on behalf of the National Parks Authority.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Bet She'arim: The Jewish Necropolis of the Roman Period

Beit She'arim was founded at the end of the 1st century BCE, during the reign of [King Herod](#), and reached the height of its prosperity in the [Roman period](#). The town suffered greatly during the repression of the Jewish rebellion in 351 against Gallus Ceasar (the ruler of the Orient under the Emperor Constantius II) and then declined; it was abandoned during the Early Arab period (7th century).

The town in southern Galilee was first mentioned by [Josephus Flavius](#) (Life 118-119) as Besara, the administrative center of the estates of Queen Berenice in the [Jezreel Valley](#) in the 2nd century. The locality became known as Beit She'arim, and a rabbinical academy was established there. Later in the same century the town gained fame when the [Sanhedrin](#) (Jewish legislature and supreme council after the destruction of [Jerusalem](#) in 70 CE) was moved to Beit She'arim and [Rabbi Judah Hanasi](#) took up residence there. The revered Rabbi is especially known as the redactor of the [Mishnah](#) (collection of oral laws) and though he died in [Zippori](#), he was buried in Beit She'arim. In the 3rd and 4th centuries, many Jews, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora, were buried in Beit She'arim, and its cemetery became a necropolis.

During ten seasons of excavation conducted in the 1930s and 1950s in the urban area of Beit She'arim and in its cemetery, many finds confirmed the identity of the site and the town's centrality in Jewish history, as recorded in written sources.

### The Town

Beit She'arim was built on the top and on the southern slopes of a hill; in the [Roman period](#) it covered an area of about 25 acres. Remains of a number of large and very well-built public buildings were uncovered. Worthy of mention are the basilica with a 40 x 14 m. hall, divided by two rows of columns, which served as a meeting place for the discussion of secular matters; and the ancient synagogue measuring 35 x 15 m. next to it.

The prayer hall of the synagogue, with two rows of columns along its sides and an elevated podium at the back, was entered from the south (the direction of Jerusalem). The interior walls were plastered and painted; some dedications to public office holders were found on the plaster.

## The Necropolis

The large cemetery of Beit She'arim contained many tombs and catacombs, some of them family tombs, others public burial places. Hewn into the slopes of the hills southwest of the town, some tombs are small and simple, but many became, in time, complex networks of catacombs. It would appear that the cutting of burial caves was an important part of the town's economy. Over the centuries, the caves were broken into, damaged and their contents robbed.

The public caves are particularly large and elaborate, with entrances via large courtyards. Their decorative stone façades are in Roman architectural style. The entrances have three openings with heavy pivoting stone doors, carved in imitation of wooden doors with panels and nails. From the entrance, one descends several steps to the burial cave, which consists of a central hallway and a network of halls, at times two stories high. One of the catacombs consists of 16 burial halls with 400 assorted burial places, including troughs, pit graves, arcosolia and loculi. Sarcophagi made of local limestone or marble and a few of clay or lead, were found in the caves. There was also evidence of burial in wooden coffins, of which only the metal parts survived.

The walls of the halls were decorated with carvings, paintings and engravings, providing examples of Jewish folk art of the period, and also Hellenistic influences. Obvious Jewish symbols are the seven-branched [menorah](#) (candelabrum), the Torah Ark (sometimes in a niche), the lulav (palm frond), etrog (citron), shofar (ram's horn) and incense shovel. There are also geometric motifs, figures of humans and animals, ships and architectural items, such as an arched gateway or a column with a capital.

Many inscriptions engraved or painted on the walls and on stone plaques mention famous rabbis, community leaders, merchants and officials of the town and the country. Of particular interest are inscriptions naming distant Jewish communities in [Syria](#), [Lebanon](#), [Egypt](#), Babylonia and even in southern Arabia, from where the remains were brought for burial.

Most of the inscriptions are in Hebrew and Greek, with a few in Aramaic. The text is usually short: the name of the deceased and shalom (peace) or haval (alas!). The longer inscriptions provide information about the deceased, such as genealogy, occupation and place of origin abroad.

Typical Hebrew inscriptions:

*This is the resting place of Yudan, son of Levi, forever in peace. May his resting place be [set?] in peace. Of Yudan, son of Levi*

*This place belongs to priests. Alas!*

A typical Aramaic inscription:

*He who is buried here is Shim'on the son of Yohanan, and an oath, whoever shall open upon him shall die of an evil end*

Typical Greek inscriptions:

*We [are the sons] of Leontios from Palmyra, the banker*

*The tomb of Aidesios, head of the council of elders, from Antiochia*

*This is the grave of Leontios, the goldsmith, father of Rabbi Paregorios and Julianos, the palatinos*

*Benjamin, the son of Julius, the textile merchant, son of the most excellent Makrobios*

Two elaborate burial complexes found on the northern slope of the town are particularly noteworthy. Semi-circular structures in the form of small theaters with benches, built above the caves, probably served as places for

prayer and sermons when families and friends met on memorial days.

Cave complex No.14 probably belonged to the family of [Rabbi Judah Hanasi](#). Hebrew inscriptions mentioning Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Gamliel and Rabbi Hanania, the sons and student of Rabbi Judah Hanasi, were found on the walls:

*Simon my son shall be hakham (president of the Sanhedrin),  
Gamaliel my son patriarch, Hanania bar Hama shall  
preside over the great court*

The most important burial complex (No. 20) has a central corridor, about 50 m. long, from which numerous halls branch off. Some 130 limestone sarcophagi decorated in a local version of Roman mortuary style were found here, as well as marble sarcophagi decorated with mythological scenes, which had been broken and used for the manufacture of lime in later periods. Most of the decorations on these sarcophagi are foreign - bulls' heads, eagles, two lions facing each other - but there are also Jewish symbols, such as the menorah. Some 20 Hebrew inscriptions were found on the walls of the cave and on sarcophagi, in which rabbis and famous persons and members of their families are mentioned:

*This is the coffin of Rabbi Hillel [Halil], the son of Rabbi  
Levi, who made this cave*

*This is the coffin of Kyra Mega, the wife of Rabbi Joshua,  
son of Levi, Shalom*

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## Bethsaida

Bethsaida is known as the birthplace of three of the Apostles – Peter, Andrew and Philip. Jesus himself visited Bethsaida and performed several miracles there. (Mark 8:22-26; Luke 9:10)

Et-Tel, the mound identified as ancient Bethsaida, is located on a basaltic spur north of the Sea of Galilee, near the inflow of the Jordan River into the Sea of Galilee. The tel covers some 20 acres and rises 30 meters above a fertile valley. Geological and geomorphological studies show that in the past this valley was part of the Sea of Galilee. A series of earthquakes caused silt to accumulate, thus creating the valley and causing the north shore of the Sea of Galilee to recede. The result of this process, which continued until the Hellenistic period, was that Bethsaida, which had originally been built on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, came to be situated some 1.5 km. north of the shore.

The name Bethsaida means "house of the hunt" in Hebrew. Identification of Et-Tel with the site mentioned in the New Testament was proposed as early as 1838 by Robinson, but was not accepted by most contemporary researchers; yet excavations conducted since 1987 have confirmed the identification.

### Biblical Period

The excavations revealed that the settlement at Bethsaida was founded in the 10th century BCE, in the biblical period. By that time the areas north and east of the Sea of Galilee were part of the Aramaean kingdom of Geshur. Its royal family, which ruled for several generations, was connected by marriage to the Davidic dynasty. King David married Ma'acha,



daughter of the King of Geshur; she was the mother of Absalom, who later found refuge in the Land of Geshur. (II Samuel 3:3; 14:32) Archeological excavations conducted at the site revealed impressive structures and fortifications, and the excavator therefore surmises that during this period Bethsaida was the capital city of the Kingdom of Geshur and the seat of its monarchs.

The city was divided into two parts: a lower city, extending over most of the mound; and an upper city – the acropolis – on the higher, northeastern part of the mound. During the 9th century BCE, the acropolis was surrounded by a massive, fortified wall with a gate, constructed of large basalt stones. The 6-m.-wide wall, together with buttresses projecting from both sides, reached a width of 8 m.

The city gate complex discovered on the eastern side of the tel consisted of an outer and an inner gateway. The outer gateway included a passageway between two massive towers; thus far, only the western tower, measuring 10 x 8 m., has been excavated. In the outer gateway, a 30-m.-long walkway paved with flat basalt stones led to the "four-room" inner gatehouse, typical of this period and measuring 35 x 17.5 m. It is preserved to an impressive height of 3 m. This is the largest city gate of the biblical period excavated in Israel. It is constructed of large basalt stones, some slightly trimmed, laid in courses. Above the stone structure stood a brick superstructure, both entirely coated with light plaster. Two huge projecting towers, 10 x 6 m. each, protected the entrance to the gate. The threshold of the gate consisted of large basalt stones with depressions that served as door-hinge sockets.

Vivid evidence of the battle that took place here at the time of the city's conquest and the conflagration which destroyed the gatehouse, is found in the fired bricks, the pile of carbonized wood and the arrowheads.

A unique feature of the Bethsaida gate is the variety of cultic installations in front of the inner gate. An entire "gate altar" (*bama*) measuring 2.1 x 1.6 m. and constructed of basalt stones covered with light plaster was found there. Two steps led to the top of the *bama* which had a recessed, 35 cm. deep stone basin, measuring 60 x 50 cm. A basalt stele that once stood at the back of the *bama* was found, broken, on it. The stele, 1.15 m. high, 59 cm. wide and 31 cm. thick, was carefully shaped with a rounded top. On its front was carved the stylized figure of a horned bull, armed with a dagger. In the Mesopotamian pantheon, the bull represents the moon god. It was adopted by the Arameans as the symbol of their main deity, Haddad, identified as the figure represented on this stele.



Inside the gatehouse was a broad, paved plaza. On its northern side stood the palace of the kings which measured 28 x 15 m. with 1.4 m. thick basalt walls. The palace of Bethsaida is a typical example of the palaces of the Aramean kingdoms during the biblical period; it included a central hall which served as the throne room, surrounded by eight rooms.

The Aramean city of Bethsaida was conquered and destroyed by the [Assyrian](#) king Tiglath Pileser III during his campaign in the region in 734 BCE. (II Kings 15:29-30; 16:7-9)

From the time of that destruction, and until the [Hellenistic period](#), the site was only sparsely inhabited.

## The Hellenistic – Roman Periods

The importance of Bethsaida during the [Hellenistic-Roman](#) period is apparent from references to it in ancient sources. Josephus Flavius states that King Herod Philip, whose kingdom included the northern part of the country, changed the name of the city at the beginning of the 1st century CE to Julias, after Julia Livia, wife of the Roman Emperor Augustus, and granted it municipal rights. (Antiquities 104, 18, 28) Also according to Josephus, Philip died in the city and was buried there with great pomp. (Antiquities 104, 18, 108)

Several courtyard-houses dating from this period were uncovered in the excavations. Constructed of basalt and probably two storeys high, they included a paved, open courtyard surrounded by several rooms. Numerous fishing tools – lead weights for nets, iron anchors, needles and fishing hooks – were found in the houses, attesting to an economy based on fishing. One of the houses had a cellar in which ceramic wine amphorae and several vine pruning hooks were found.

At the beginning of the first century CE, a building with particularly thick walls, measuring 20 x 6 m. was constructed above the remains of the city gate of the biblical period. Only very fragmentary remains of the foundations were found. Limestone ashlar brought from a considerable distance and fragments of decorated architectural elements are suggestive of the elegance of this building. Ritual vessels, including two decorated bronze incense shovels, indicate that it functioned as a temple. Perhaps these are the remains of the temple that King Philip built in honor of Julia Livia.

Excavations at the site are still underway. It is assumed that further finds from the periods of settlement await the archeologists' spades. In the meantime, the site has been opened to visitors.

The excavations at Bethsaida are directed by R. Arav on behalf of the Bethsaida Excavations Consortium headed by the University of Nebraska.

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## Byzantine Churches in the Negev

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In the first century BCE, the Nabateans (nomadic traders from Northern Arabia) established a kingdom in today's [Kingdom of Jordan](#) with Petra as its capital. They accumulated great wealth from their trade in costly perfumes and spices from East Africa and Arabia, which they transported by camel caravans to the southern Mediterranean port of Gaza. To secure their trade routes, the Nabateans built way stations at the intersections of the main routes – at Kurnub (Mampsis), Shivta and Avdat.

In the inhospitable Negev desert, the Nabateans developed an agriculture based on terraces built into the hillsides and on a sophisticated system for collecting every drop of available water: to capture flood waters, they constructed dams in the valleys; to collect rain water, they cut cisterns into the rock. Their way stations grew into cities.

The Nabatean kingdom was conquered by the [Romans](#) in the year 106 and annexed to the Roman Empire.

**Kurnub** is located some 40 km. east of Be'er Sheva, above Nahal Mamshit. The [Romans](#) fortified it as one of the limes, the network of forts demarcating and protecting the eastern border of the Roman Empire. During the [Roman](#) and [Byzantine](#) periods, Kurnub was a flourishing city. In the second half of the 4th century, two churches were built here. The city was abandoned at the time of the [Arab conquest](#) (mid-7th century).

The Eastern Church was built on the highest point of the city. It is part of a 55 x 25 m. complex consisting of service rooms and a small bathhouse. In front of the church was an atrium (courtyard) surrounded by porticoes

(roofed aisles); under the courtyard was a cistern covered over with arches. The church measured 25.5 x 15 m., had two rows of columns, a *bema* (raised platform) and an apse. The hall of the church was paved with mosaics in geometrical patterns and large crosses; the aisles were paved with stone slabs. A small room with a baptismal font in its floor was found south of the church. Parts of the foundations of a four-roomed tower were uncovered near the entrance to the church, apparently a bell tower, since a large stone sundial was found there.

The smaller but more elaborate Western Church, located in the western part of the city, was of similar design. The mosaic floor of its hall was divided into octagonal medallions in which birds and baskets of fruit are depicted, with two peacocks in front of the raised platform. Two of the dedicatory inscriptions mention a man by the name of Nilus as the builder of the church, as well as the names of two of the church's beadles.

**Shivta** is located some 40 km. southwest of Be'er Sheva. Some of the buildings now standing date from the [Roman](#) period, but most were built in [Byzantine](#) times, when the inhabitants engaged in intensive agriculture. In the 4th century two churches were built here (the northern and the southern); later, in the 5th-6th century, when the city expanded, the central church was added. Shivta appears to have been abandoned at some point during the [Islamic period](#) (9th-10th century).

The Southern Church was built among the Roman-period buildings, next to the water cisterns. Because of lack of space it had only one apse, with a room on either side of it. In the 6th century, these rooms were turned into two small side apses with wall paintings, surviving fragments of which depict [Moses](#) and [Elijah](#) and the Transfiguration of Christ. During a later phase, several rooms were added north of the basilica, including chapels and a large baptistery with a stone cruciform baptismal font and a smaller, rock-cut font for infant baptism. An inscription on a lintel attests to the building of these annexes at the beginning of the 5th century, and one incorporated into the floor the year 640.

The Northern Church was part of a large monastery, which consisted of many courtyards and some 40 rooms, in the very north of the city. The only entrance to the church was through a particularly large atrium (21 x 15 m.), which had an opening into the rock-cut cistern beneath it. Between the atrium and the church is a *narthex* (passageway) leading to the triple entrance of the basilica, which measures 12 x 10 m., divided by two rows of six columns into a main hall and two aisles. As in the northern church,

the original central apse with rooms on either side of it was replaced with a triple apse in the 6th century. Niches in the rear walls of the side apses probably contained reliquaries. Marble slabs covered the floor and also the lower part of the walls.

A chapel was constructed south of the basilica, with an apse in its eastern side. The floor is paved with mosaics in geometrical patterns and contains an inscription attesting to its construction in the time of Bishop Thomas in the fifth year of the indiction (517).

The baptistery, with a large stone-cut baptismal font, lies south of the chapel. It was also used as a cemetery, and contains several gravestones with the names of monks and priests, dated between 612 and 679.

The Central Church was built in the center of the new (5th-6th century) residential quarter in the northern part of Shivta. It has a small, narrow atrium through which one enters a basilica measuring 18 x 14 m. Along its length run two rows of four columns and on its eastern side are three apses.

**Avdat** is located on a mountain ridge in the center of the Negev highlands. In the middle of the 3rd century it was resettled and became an important [Roman](#) military outpost, with a residential quarter on the spur southeast of the acropolis. In the sixth century, under [Byzantine](#) rule, Avdat had an estimated population of 3,000. New agricultural crops were grown in the valleys around the city and a number of wine presses, which have been excavated, indicate intensive vine cultivation. A citadel and a monastery with two churches were built on the acropolis. The city was destroyed, probably by earthquake, and abandoned in the 7th century.

The Northern Church, in basilical style, was reached through an atrium with a cistern and had a single apse. Behind it, to the west, was a baptismal font in cruciform shape and a smaller font for baptizing infants.

The more important Southern Church had three apses on the eastern side. In the floor are reliquaries for the remains of local saints. In the floor of the prayer hall of the church are the tombs of clerical dignitaries with inscriptions on stone slabs covering the tombs, dating from 542 to 618. One of the inscriptions gives the name of the church, The Martyrion of St. Theodorus, also known from other inscriptions, who served as abbot of the monastery of Avdat and was buried in this church.

The excavations at Kurnub were conducted by A. Negev of the Hebrew

University of Jerusalem and the National Parks Authority; the excavations at Shivta date from the 1930s . Cleaning and restoration was done on behalf of the National Parks Authority under A. Aviyonah; the excavations at Avdat were conducted by A. Negev on behalf of the National Parks Authority and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Caesarea

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Caesarea is located on the Mediterranean coast, about midway between Haifa and Tel Aviv. Archeological excavations during the 1950s and 1960s uncovered remains from many periods, in particular, a complex of fortifications of the [Crusader](#) city and the [Roman](#) theater.

During the past 20 years, major excavations conducted by numerous expeditions from Israel and abroad have exposed impressive reminders of the forgotten grandeur of both the [Roman](#) and the [Crusader](#) cities.

### The Roman City

Founded by King Herod in the first century BCE on the site of a Phoenician and Greek trade post known as Straton's Tower, Caesarea was named for Herod's [Roman](#) patron, Augustus Caesar. This city was described in detail by the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. (Antiquities XV. 331 ff; War I, 408 ff) It was a walled city, with the [largest harbor on the eastern Mediterranean coast](#), named Sebastos, the Greek name of the emperor Augustus.

The temple of the city, dedicated to Augustus Caesar, was built on a high podium facing the harbor. A broad flight of steps led from the pier to the temple. Public buildings and elaborate entertainment facilities in the imperial tradition were erected. King Herod's palace was in the southern part of the city.

In the year 6 CE, Caesarea became the seat of the [Roman](#) procurators of Provincia Judaea and headquarters of the 10th Roman Legion. In the 2nd

and 3rd centuries, the city expanded and became one of most important in the eastern part of the [Roman Empire](#), classified as the "Metropolis of the Province of Syria Palaestina,"

Caesarea played an important role in early Christian history. Here the baptism of the [Roman](#) officer Cornelius took place; (Acts 10:1-5, 25-28) from here Paul set sail for his journeys in the eastern Mediterranean; and here he was taken prisoner and sent to Rome for trial. (Acts 23:23-24)

*The palace* was built on a rock promontory jutting out into the sea, in the southern part of the [Roman](#) city. The excavations revealed a large architectural complex, measuring 110 x 60 m., with a decorative pool, surrounded by porticoes. This elegant structure in its unique location was identified as Herod's palace. (Antiquities, XV, 332) The palace was in use throughout the [Roman](#) period, as attested to by two columns with Greek and Latin dedicatory inscriptions naming governors of the province of Judea.

*The theater* is located in the very south of the city. It was commissioned by King Herod and is the earliest of the [Roman](#) entertainment facilities built in his kingdom. The theater faces the sea and has thousands of seats resting on a semi-circular structure of vaults. The semi-circular floor of the orchestra, first paved in painted plaster, was later paved with marble.

In the excavated theater a stone was found, bearing parts of an inscription mentioning Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, and the Tiberium (the edifice in honor of the Emperor Tiberius) which he built.

*The amphitheater*, on the city's southern shore, was also mentioned by Josephus Flavius. It was north-south oriented and measured 64 x 31 m. Its eastern and rounded southern side are well preserved; the western side was largely destroyed by the sea. A 1.05 m-high wall surrounded an arena, covered with crushed, beaten chalk. When first built in the Herodian period, it seated about 8,000 spectators; in the first century CE seating areas were added, increasing its capacity to 15,000. The dimensions, shape and installations indicate that this amphitheater was used for racing horses and chariots and was, in fact, a hippodrome. An inscription found here reads Morismus [the] charioteer. During the second century, the amphitheater was rebuilt and adapted for use as a more standard type of amphitheater.

*The Aqueduct*, which provided an abundant supply of water, was built in

the Herodian period; it was later repaired and enlarged to a double channel when the city grew. The upper aqueduct begins at the springs located some nine kilometers northeast of Caesarea, at the foot of Mt. Carmel. It was constructed with considerable engineering know-how, ensuring the flow of water, by gravity, from the springs to the city. In some portions, the aqueduct was supported by rows of arches, then it crossed the kurkar ridge along the coast via a tunnel. Entering the city from the north, the water flowed through a network of pipes to collecting pools and fountains throughout the city. Many inscriptions in the aqueduct ascribe responsibility for its maintenance to the Second and Tenth Legions.

## Byzantine Caesarea

During this period, Caesarea became an important Christian center. The Church Father Origen founded a Christian academy in the city, which included a library of 30,000 manuscripts. At the beginning of the 4th century, the theologian Eusebius, who served as Bishop of Caesarea, composed here his monumental *Historia Ecclesiastica* on the beginnings of Christianity and the *Onomasticon*, a comprehensive geographical-historical study of the Holy Land.

[Byzantine](#) Caesarea was surrounded by a 2.5 km. long wall, which protected the residential quarters built outside the [Roman](#) city. It had a 3 m.-wide city gate in its southern section. Side by side with the Christian population and its numerous churches, there were Jewish and Samaritan communities that built elaborate synagogues. During this period, the [Roman](#) inner harbor was blocked and buildings were constructed on what had become dry land. A row of vaults serving as shops was built against the podium wall facing the port.

The main church was the *Martyrion of the Holy Procopius*, built in the 6th century upon the remains of the Roman temple on the podium. The octagonal, 39 m.-wide church stood within a square precinct measuring 50 x 50 m., surrounded by rooms along its walls. The floor was paved with marble slabs in a variety of patterns. Of the rows of columns in the building, several Corinthian capitals decorated with crosses were found.

A very large and elaborate building, which included numerous courtyards and rooms spread over the area of an entire *insula* (block of buildings) and surrounded by the main streets of the city, was dubbed the government building. Its entrance was from the *cardo* (north-south main street), its western side supported by a row of vaults, which had once served as port

warehouses. One such vault facing the *decumanus* (east-west main street) was plastered and decorated with red and black wall paintings, including depictions of Jesus and the twelve apostles.

A large hall with an apse, located in the center of the government building, served as the hall of justice. Fragments of a Greek inscription found here refer to an imperial decree dealing with fees that clerks of the court may collect for services rendered. In the northeastern part of the building was a group of rooms with mosaic floors; one with a quote from Paul's Letter to the Romans. (13:3) Rectangular niches in the walls of a long hall north of the hall of justice probably served as an archive.

Remains of a 5th century synagogue were found on the seashore north of the harbor. The rectangular building faces south towards [Jerusalem](#). Architectural details were found in its ruins, including capitals with carved [menorot](#) (candelabra), a column inscribed shalom and parts of a Hebrew inscription listing the twenty-four priestly courses in the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#).

Remains of several other large buildings were exposed, among them an elaborate 4th century renovated bathhouse. It consisted of groups of courtyards and rooms with benches along the walls, most of them paved with mosaics, and in the *caldarium* (hot-room) area were several rooms with a heating system (hypocaust). Some particularly elegant rooms were paved in marble and had mosaic decorations on the walls; one depicts a female with the words "pretty woman" next to it.

Inside the amphitheater, which was no longer in use, a two-level palace was built with a staircase connecting the two levels. The upper level included two courtyards and rooms paved in colored tiles or mosaics and served as the residence. The lower level had a courtyard with an apse on one side, paved in colored tiles. Along this courtyard stood two rows of columns with a marble chancel screen between them and in the northern wall was a fountain with a rectangular basin below it. This lower level served as an open garden.

## Arab Caesarea

In 639, Caesarea was conquered by the Arabs and its importance, as well as its population, dwindled. Urban areas were abandoned and replaced by agricultural terraces. This Arab town was surrounded in the 10th century by a 3 m.-thick wall, remains of which were found during the excavations.

## Caesarea of the Crusaders

In 1101, the Frankish army under King Baldwin I conquered Caesarea. Caesarea became the seat of an archbishop and not only Franks but also eastern Christians and Muslims settled there. The Genoese found a green-colored glass vessel in the city and declared it to be the Holy Grail, the goblet used by Jesus at the Last Supper. It was taken to Genoa and placed in the Church of San Lorenzo.

Caesarea was captured by Saladin in 1187 after only a short siege. It was retaken in 1191 by Richard the Lion Heart, King of England, who exiled the Muslim inhabitants.

Because of the growing Muslim threat, Louis IX, King of France (who was later canonized), restored and fortified Caesarea in 1251-52. A magnificent 4 m.-thick wall, some 1.6 km. long, surrounded the city, which covered an area of about 40 acres. It was also protected by a glacis, towers and a 10 m.-deep and 15 m.-wide moat.

Access to the city was via gates, the main one located in the eastern wall. Approach to the main gate, of the indirect access type, was via a bridge built on arches which were supported by piers at the bottom of the moat. The square gatehouse had a cross-vaulted ceiling supported by consoles decorated with floral motifs. The doors were closed on the inside with wooden bars and were protected on the outside by an iron grill, which was lowered through a slot from the ceiling. These most impressive fortifications were described in great detail by contemporary [Crusader](#) chroniclers.

The cathedral of the [Crusader](#) city was built on the podium raised by King Herod to serve as his city's acropolis. The 12th century cathedral, the eastern part of which was added in the middle of the 13th century, was a modest structure measuring 55 x 2 m. The hall was divided into a central nave and two aisles that ended in the east in three apses; the floor was paved in mosaics. The vaulting was supported by rectangular piers and pilasters.

The end of [Crusader](#) Caesarea came in 1265, when the [Mamluk](#) Sultan Baybars attacked the city. After a short siege, the [Crusader](#) defenders gave up hope and evacuated the city. The conquering [Mamluks](#), fearing a return

of the [Crusaders](#), razed the city's fortifications to the ground.

Caesarea is a most impressive archeological site, open to the public. One can visit the Roman-period theater, King Herod's palace, the amphitheater and much more. One can also cross the moat, enter the restored [Crusader](#) city and look towards the harbor from the top of the podium.

Renewed excavations in the 1990s have been conducted by two expeditions: The Israel Antiquities Authority, directed by S. Porat; The Combined Caesarea Expedition of the Center of Maritime Studies, Haifa University led by A. Raban, the University of Maryland, led by K. Holum, and the Institute of Archeology, Haifa University, led by J. Patrich.

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## Capernaum

by [Hillel Geva](#)

The remains of [Capernaum](#) of the [New Testament](#) are located on the northern shore of the [Sea of Galilee](#). The town was a center of [Jesus'](#) activities in the Jewish Galilee ([Matthew](#) 4:13, 8:5) and became known as "His own city" ([Matthew](#) 9:1), where he performed several miracles ([Luke](#) 4:31-35; [Matthew](#) 8:14-17; [Mark](#) 5:21-42), and visited the [synagogue](#) ([Mark](#) 1:21-28). Capernaum is also mentioned by [Josephus Flavius](#) (Life 72), who was brought there after being wounded in battle. [Christian](#) sources of the [Byzantine](#) period describe Capernaum as a village inhabited by Jews and Christians. In the Early [Muslim](#) period (7th-8th centuries), Capernaum continued to prosper, then declined and was abandoned in the 11th century. Its ruins were known in Arabic as Tel Hum, preserving the ancient Hebrew name Kfar Nahum (the village of Nahum).

The remains of the buildings and of the [synagogue](#) were identified in 1838 by Eduard Robinson as Capernaum of the New Testament period and have since then attracted many researchers, primarily Christians. The site was acquired by the Franciscan Fathers at the end of the 19th century, and they conducted excavations, mainly of the synagogue building and of the octagonal structure south of it. The synagogue was partially restored in the early 20th century. Extensive excavations in the area of the village and of the foundations of the [synagogue](#) and the octagonal structure were renewed by the Franciscan Fathers between 1968 and 1972, and in 1978-1982 excavations were conducted in the area of the Greek Orthodox church, east of the synagogue.

Capernaum was first established during the Hellenistic period (2nd century BCE). During the period of [Jesus'](#) activity in the [Galilee](#) (beginning of the 1st century CE), it was a large Jewish village. In the Late [Roman](#) and [Byzantine](#) periods (3rd-7th centuries) it became a prosperous town spread over some 13 acres, along the shore of the [Sea of Galilee](#) and the moderate slope to the north. The inhabitants were fishermen, farmers and merchants. A [Roman](#) milestone bearing an inscription from the period of the Emperor Hadrian (early 2nd century CE) attests to the important road across the village, which linked the Galilee with [Damascus](#).

Excavations revealed that the houses of the [Second Temple](#) period were arranged in insulae (blocks) with streets running between them. Generally consisting of a large courtyard surrounded by rooms, the houses were constructed of local basalt and cement and their walls were covered with light-colored plaster. Each house had only one entrance, from the street. The courtyards were paved with basalt, and staircases were built along their walls, which gave access to the second story or the roof. Many ovens were uncovered in the courtyards, and the houses contained numerous grinding stones made of basalt.

## The Synagogue

[The synagogue of Capernaum](#) was an impressive structure. Built of large, white limestone blocks from the hills of Galilee west of the town, it stood out among the buildings of grey basalt surrounding it. The synagogue was built on a platform, two meters above the houses of the town, and separated from it by streets on all four sides. Oriented north-south, it had a decorated, southern façade towards Jerusalem.

The synagogue consisted of a prayer hall (20.5 x 18.5 m.), a courtyard to the east (20.5 x 11 m.) and an entrance porch (4 m. wide), running along the façade of the entire building. Staircases, on both sides of the entrance porch, led to the synagogue. The prayer hall was reached from the courtyard by a single entrance. All parts of the synagogue were paved with large, thick slabs of smoothed limestone.

*The Prayer Hall.* Basilical in plan, its outer walls were decorated with prominent, flat pilasters. Three entrances in the southern wall opened from the porch to the prayer hall. The hall was divided by a row of columns (16 in all), that created three narrow aisles along three of its walls (all except

the southern wall of the façade). The columns were placed on high pedestals and supported Corinthian capitals. Stone benches were placed along the western and eastern walls. The researchers cannot agree whether there was a storey above the prayer hall; according to a proposed reconstruction, the prayer hall was covered by a gabled roof constructed of wooden beams with clay rooftiles.

*The Courtyard.* An addition on the eastern side of the prayer hall, constructed at a later date, was reached from the porch in the south by two entrances, with another entrance via a staircase in the northeastern corner of the courtyard. There were three windows in the eastern wall, high above street level. The courtyard was divided by columns into a central, unroofed part, with three covered porticos along the walls, except along the western wall (shared with the prayer hall).

*Synagogue decorations.* The synagogue was decorated with a white limestone relief of very high quality and included a number of motifs unknown from other ancient synagogues. Hundreds of fragments of decorated masonry elements were found in a heap covering the remains of the synagogue, scattered nearby, or in secondary use. These decorations once embellished the upper part of the building, mainly its outside, but despite the abundance of decorations that survived, it could only be partially restored.

The figurative motifs are few and many have been broken by iconoclasts. There were figures of animals, as in a cornice depicting a sea horse and two eagles with a wreath in their beaks. An eagle also appears in the center of the lintel above the main entrance to the prayer hall. On the lintel above the western entrance to the prayer hall appears a lion; statues of lions were apparently also placed on both sides of the gabled roof (acroteria).

Jewish motifs were common: a seven-branched menorah with a ram's horn and an incense shovel appears on one capital; on a lintel is a chariot, which is widely regarded as depicting the [Ark of the Covenant](#).

Among the floral motifs with Jewish connotations are palm fronds, clusters of grapes and pomegranates. There are also geometric motifs, including rosettes, stars, pentagons and hexagons.

*Inscriptions.* On a column in the prayer hall appears the following three-line Greek inscription:

**Herod son of Mo[ni]mos and Justus his son,  
together with (his) children,  
erected this column.**

An Aramaic inscription, found on a column which apparently stood in the courtyard of the synagogue, reads:

**Halfu son of Zebida, the son of Yohanan, made this column. May he  
be blessed.**

*Dating the synagogue.* Researchers' opinions differ regarding the date of the synagogue's construction. All agree that it is not the 1st century CE synagogue from the time of [Jesus](#). According to most, the Galilee synagogue type, to which the Capernaum synagogue belongs, dates to the [Roman period](#) (2nd and 3rd centuries CE). It includes Roman architectural elements (the columns and the architectural elements above the columns: the architraves, the friezes and the cornices) with emphasis on the external form and decoration of the structure. Historical data also support this construction date. In this period, following the destruction of [Jerusalem](#) and the [Temple](#), the Jewish population and its religious institutions were concentrated in the Galilee, where their political and economic predominance made the building of so elaborate a synagogue possible.

In new excavations, in the foundations of the artificial podium on which the synagogue stood, some remains of the 1st century village were found, which existed until the 4th century. Pottery and coins found beneath the floor of the synagogue and in the fill of the podium date the structure, in the view of the Franciscan fathers who excavated them, to not earlier than the 4th, or the beginning of the 5th century.

Among the structures uncovered beneath the prayer hall of the synagogue was a well-paved floor extending over a large area. The foundation of the western wall of the prayer hall was constructed of basalt, unlike the other limestone walls of the structure, and its orientation was also slightly different from the wall above it. The excavators concluded, therefore, that the stone floor and the lower-earlier western wall are remains of the synagogue from the time of [Jesus](#) described in the [New Testament](#). Supporting this conclusion is the fact that it was common practice to build new synagogues and churches on the ruins of previous ones.

The excavators' conclusion regarding so late a date for the synagogue at

Capernaum is most surprising and not accepted by all researchers; it could have far-reaching archeological and historical repercussions. Is it possible that the elaborate synagogue at Capernaum (and other synagogues resembling it in the Galilee), were constructed under [Byzantine](#) Christian rule, in apparent contradiction to what is known concerning the hostile attitude of the Byzantine administration towards the Jewish population. Is it possible that the Roman architectural style remained in use for building synagogues in the Galilee alongside the characteristically modest Byzantine-style buildings? These were decorated inside only, the apse faced Jerusalem and they had colorful mosaic floors with a variety of figurative motifs and Jewish symbols.

## **The House of Peter**

Located some 30m. south of the synagogue, structural remains of three building periods were uncovered. In the lowest level were remains of a dwelling of the 1st century BCE, identified by Christian tradition as the [house of St. Peter](#). During this early period, religious significance was already attributed to the building, rooms were added and its walls and floors were covered with light-colored plaster. The building and its largest room (7 x 6.5 m.) served as a domus ecclesia (church house) for the community. Pilgrims who visited there in the Roman period left graffiti on its walls, including the words "Jesus", "Lord", "Messiah" and "God" in Greek, Latin and Syriac, as well as Christian symbols including the crucifix, a boat and fish.

During the 4th century, the building was enclosed by a high-walled, square precinct (27 x 27 m.). An atrium was added at the entrance and its walls were covered with colored plaster.

In the mid 5th century, an octagonal church was constructed on the earlier remains. It consisted of two concentric octagons (16.5 m. and 8 m. in diameter, respectively). The inner octagon was built directly on the walls of the House of Peter, so as to preserve a memory of that building. It was paved with colored mosaic and had a peacock, an ancient Christian symbol for eternal life, at the center. On three sides of the outer octagon were porticos paved in mosaic with geometric designs. The entrance to the building was on the west side. On the east side was a small apse with a baptismal font and rooms on each side.

## **Excavations in the Area Belonging to the Greek-Orthodox Church**



Excavations in this area east of the synagogue revealed remains of a village which existed from the [Byzantine](#) period to the 11th century. The houses were constructed of basalt and paved in stone. An apparently public building (13 x 13 m.) of the Byzantine period was modified to serve as living quarters in the early [Islamic period](#). On the northern slope of the village, a planned residential area was exposed. It included a series of dwellings with courtyards and streets between them along which ran drainage channels. Evidence of destruction by earthquake (apparently in 749), was found there.

The excavations were conducted by the Franciscan Fathers V. Corbo and S. Loffreda on behalf of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem. The excavations in the property of the Greek Orthodox Church were carried out by V. Tsaferis on behalf of the Department of Antiquities (now the Israel Antiquities Authority).

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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### The Carmel Caves: Dwellings of Prehistoric Man

The caves are located on the western slopes of Mt. Carmel, some 20 km. south of Haifa, where *Nahal Me'arot* (Valley of the Caves) emerges into the Coastal Plain. They were first excavated in the 1920s and 1930s. Then new digs were conducted from the late 1960s onwards, using advanced scientific methods based on modern geological, archeological and palynological (paleontological study of pollen, fossils, etc.) research.

Flint tools, animal bones and human burials found in the Carmel Caves contribute greatly to the understanding of the physical and cultural evolution of man in the early phases of his existence.

#### The Tabun Cave (Cave of the Oven)

The Tabun Cave was occupied intermittently during the Lower and Middle Paleolithic ages (half a million to some 40,000 years ago). In the course of this extremely long period of time, deposits of sand, silt and clay of up to 25 m. accumulated in the cave. Excavation proved that it has one of the longest sequences of human occupation in the Levant.

The earliest deposits contain large amounts of sea sand. This, and pollen traces found, suggest a relatively warm climate. The melting glaciers which covered large parts of the globe caused the sea level to rise and the Mediterranean coastline to recede. The Coastal Plain was narrower than it is today, and was covered with savannah vegetation. The cave dwellers used handaxes of flint or limestone for killing animals (gazelle, hippopotamus, rhinoceros and wild cattle which roamed the Coastal Plain) and for digging out plant roots. The tools improved slowly over a period of tens of thousands of years. The handaxes became smaller and

better shaped and scrapers, made of thick flakes chipped off flint cores, were probably used for scraping meat off bones and for processing animal skins.

The upper levels in the Tabun Cave consist mainly of clay and silt, indicating that a colder, more humid climate prevailed when glaciers formed once more; this caused the Mediterranean Sea level to drop some 100 m., to its present level. It also produced a wider coastal strip, covered by dense forests and swamps.

The material remains from the upper strata in the Tabun Cave are of the Mousterian culture (about 200,000 - 45,000 years ago). Small flint tools, made of thin flakes, predominate here, many produced by the Levallois technique: a method of carefully trimming the flint core before the desired shape of the flake is struck off. Tools typical of this culture are elongated points, flakes of various shapes used as scrapers, end scrapers and many denticulate tools used for cutting and sawing.

The diet of the people who manufactured and used these tools consisted of fruit, seeds, roots and leaves with a supplement of meat - gazelle, fallow deer, roe deer, and wild boar. The large number of bones of fallow deer found in the upper layers of the Tabun Cave may be due to the chimney-like opening in the back of the cave which functioned as a natural trap. The animals were probably herded towards it and fell into the cave where they were butchered.

The Tabun Cave contains a Neanderthal-type burial of a female, dated to about 120,000 years ago. It is one of the most ancient human skeletal remains found in Israel.

## **The Skhul Cave (Cave of the Kids)**

Numerous human burials dated to approximately the same time were found in this nearby cave. Fourteen skeletons were uncovered, including three complete ones; they were defined as an archaic type of Homo sapiens, closely related to modern humans in physical appearance. It is believed that this human, with delicate facial features, a protruding chin and straight forehead, was fully developed around 100,000 years ago. The finds from these graves also show evidence of cult and rituals related to death and the spiritual realm.

The finds in the cave are of major importance to anthropological

prehistoric research of the development of the human species. The theory that Homo sapiens did not develop from Neanderthal man, but that both lived contemporaneously, is becoming increasingly accepted: Neanderthal man became extinct while Homo sapiens developed into the modern human race.

## **The El-Wad Cave (Cave of the Valley)**

This is the largest of the Mt. Carmel caves. The accumulated layers provide evidence of human presence from the end of the occupation of the Tabun Cave (approximately 45,000 years ago).

Important finds from this cave are of the Natufian culture (10,500 to 8,500 BCE), a highly developed culture relative to those preceding it. It signals the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic cultures, from plant-gathering and animal-hunting to plant-growing and animal-domestication. During this period, the level of the Mediterranean Sea rose again, as the glacial period came to an end, and the coastline stabilized, to roughly its present contours. The Coastal Plain became narrower and was covered by sparse forest and grasslands, with swamps in low-lying areas. The number of animal species had declined and consisted mainly of gazelles and wild cattle.

The population of the El-Wad cave used both the cave and the broad terrace in front of it. The settlement is believed to have been permanent, a unique development in terms of previous lifestyles in the caves. It consisted of a few families living in a tent-village which served as the base for hunting expeditions and food gathering.

The Natufian flint tools are of very high quality and delicacy, very small and carefully retouched. These microliths were primarily scrapers for treating animal skins, points for wood- and bone-working, awls for piercing stones used as fishing weights, skins and decorative beads, blades for cutting meat and sawing bone and sickle blades (secured in wooden or bone scythes) for harvesting grain (which left a characteristic gloss on the edge of the blades). There were also microliths of lunate shape, used as arrowheads, for harpoons and as fish hooks and larger tools made of rough chunks of flint for cracking bones and hard-shelled seeds. Grinding tools, mortars and pestles made of stone, were used for food processing.

On the terrace in front of the cave, more than one hundred individual

human burials were excavated. The dead were buried in a tightly flexed position, some with ornaments made of stone, bone or dentalia shell. The large number of skeletons provided anthropologists with the opportunity to study the physical characteristics of this Natufian population. The average height was between 1.58 and 1.65 m., the heads relatively large with wide and rather low foreheads, characteristics typical of populations of this period in the eastern Mediterranean Basin.

The El-Wad cave is now open to the public and visitors may appraise the many prehistoric finds and their place in the development of the human race.

The Tabun cave was excavated (1969-71) by A.J. Jelinek of the University of Arizona and since 1971 under the direction of A. Ronen of Haifa University.

The El-Wad cave was excavated by F. Falla of the French Archeological Mission in Jerusalem and by O. Bar Yosef of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1980-81), and since 1980 by M. Weinstein-Evron on behalf of Haifa University.

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## Cave of the Treasure

by Hillel Geva

The "Cave of the Treasure" is located on a cliff in a canyon that descends through the Judean Desert to the [Dead Sea](#), some 10 km. southwest of [Ein-Gedi](#). This is an extremely hot, dry region which helped to preserve the archeological finds.

In the Judean Desert expedition of 1960-1961, tens of caves in the canyons were searched and several of them excavated. The Cave of the Treasure is a natural cave with a broad opening on the cliffside. Its mouth is some 50 m. below the top of the cliff that drops another 250 m. to the bed of the canyon. In the past, a narrow path along the cliff led to the cave, but it collapsed from erosion and rock falls. The excavators had to reach the cave by means of a ladder.

This cave, like others in the region, was inhabited in the Chalcolithic period (4th millenium BCE) and deep occupation layers, mainly of ash and refuse, were found, including many artifacts: crude hand-made clay vessels decorated with red paint, typical of the period; globular stone grinding and pounding vessels; flint implements used for cutting and as arrowheads; bone implements such as awls; and necklaces of shell, bone and semi-precious stones. Portions of a loom built of wooden beams, stone and clay loom weights, spatulas showing signs of use, spindle whorls, and cloth pieces of woven linen and wool were found, as well as wooden artifacts, strainers, portions of straw mats, ropes and basketry and even part of a leather garment and the sole of a sandal. The botanical finds attest to the food of the inhabitants of the cave: wheat and barley, lentils, olives and dates. Faunal remains include bones of sheep and goats, hunted

animals such as deer and ibex, and a variety of birds. In this cave and in the one next to it, burials of men, women and children, placed in pits with pottery vessels, were uncovered.

## **The Hoard**

At a depth of approximately 2 m. below the present floor, a crevice in the northern wall of the cave was found. In it, wrapped in a reed mat, was a hoard of 429 artifacts, all made of copper, except for a very few of stone or ivory. They were undamaged and well preserved, despite the fact that they had been hidden there over 5,500 years ago. These artifacts were produced by casting and hammering techniques of a very high level. The dating of the hoard to the Chalcolithic period was based on comparison with finds from other sites of this period. The similarity with the decorative motifs on ceramic ossuaries associated with this period in other regions is noteworthy. The dating was confirmed by Carbon 14 testing of the reed mat as 3500-2800 BCE.

The hoard of copper artifacts includes implements of many forms and with a variety of decorations:

*Tools:* chisels and axes of various sizes (15-35 cm.), some elongated and flat and some short and thick.

*Mace heads:* some 240 mace heads of various size (3–6 cm. in diameter, weighing between 100–700 gm.), no two identical. They are of many shapes – globular, flattened, disk-shaped and spiked; highly polished, some with impressed or protruding decoration; all perforated from top to bottom for a wooden handle (some fragments of these were found). There are also several maceheads made of haenatite.

*Standards:* 80 of these, 10-40 cm. long and 2-3 cm. in diameter; some hollow and some solid. Many are decorated with engraved lines, herringbone pattern, or globular or flat protrusions; some are decorated with images of animals such as ibex, deer, squab, wild goat and birds.

*Crowns:* ten crowns, similar in form, but varying in size: 15.5-19 cm. in diameter, 9-17.5 cm. in height, 930-1,970 gm. in weight. The walls are concave, decorated with herringbone and spiral patterns. On top of the crowns protrude architectural motifs (gates), animals and birds, a human face and prominent horns.



Other bronze implements in the hoard include small baskets with high, arc-shaped handles and horns.

Among the finds are several unique objects made of hippopotamus ivory. Shaped like a scythe, they are 30-40 cm. long (one exceptional example is 55 cm. long, 7 cm. wide and weighs 800 gm.). They are flat and have rows of drilled holes (47-73 each). At the center is a large hole with a ridge around it. They may have been carried on cultic standards of wooden poles, inserted into the central hole.

## Summary

The quantity of dwelling remains and the nature of the finds (apart from the objects of the hoard) attest to the cave's occupation over an extended period of time. Caves were frequently inhabited in the Chalcolithic period, but the researchers concluded that these cave dwellers were not refugees in a temporary hiding place. The caves in the region seem to have been inhabited mainly in the spring grazing season; on the plateau above the cave an enclosure was found, measuring 37 x 27 m., surrounded by a low stone fence. One view is that this was a cultic center, but more probably it was a pen for livestock.

The forms of the artifacts in the hoard and the variety of artistic motifs indicate that these were cultic objects. Some of the decorations attest to a fertility cult. They also provide rich evidence of the artistic abilities of the population of this region in the Chalcolithic period. Their cultic rituals undoubtedly included prayers to the gods for success in hunting, in grazing their flocks and in agriculture, as well as for protection from enemies. The great quantity and variety of finds could be indicative of an organized socio-political and religious hierarchy and of the nature of the rituals performed in a temple of the region. There is also evidence of a large number of participants in religious rituals and festivals. The copper objects of the hoard weigh many tens of kilograms, the value of which was obviously enormous at the time, since use of copper had only just begun in the Chalcolithic period, and its production was a long and expensive process.

Anthropological study of the skeletons found in the cave show that the population was not of local origin; the technological attributes and decorations of the artifacts may have their origin in Mesopotamia.

It is not clear why the hoard was deposited in this cave. The vessels were

probably used in a central regional temple, possibly in the Chalcolithic temple discovered on a terrace above Ein Gedi, which was found completely empty (see Archeological Sites in Israel No. 4, pp. 34-35). It has been proposed that the priests of that temple, or the inhabitants of the region, assembled the temple's cultic objects at a time of approaching danger and hid them in the cave for safekeeping. The fate of the Chalcolithic inhabitants is also not known. They may have fled, or been killed, leaving the hoard safely behind, to be discovered by Israeli archeologists.

The Cave of the Treasure was excavated by P. Bar-Adon on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Exploration Society and the Department of Antiquities (today the Israel Antiquities Authority).

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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# Church of John the Baptist Discovered

(July 20, 1999)

The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced on July 3, 1999, that a sixth century Byzantine church dedicated to John the Baptist has been discovered at the Tel a-Shakef dig at an Israel military installation in the Gaza Strip.

The Church, measuring 13x25 meters in area, is covered in marble floor tiles and multi-colored mosaics of geometric shapes and flora motifs, as well as three Greek inscriptions, translated by IAA Professor Vassilios Tzaperis as follows:

1. A line from Psalms 95:1, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord," mistakenly rendered as, "O come, let us become sanctified unto the Lord."
2. Deuteronomy 28:6: "Blessed will you be when you come in, and blessed will you be when you go out."
3. At the entrance to the church is a multi-colored mosaic of a medallion containing 11 lines that state that the church is dedicated to John the Baptist, was founded in 544 and completed in 550, and praise the church's donors - Victor and John.

Dig Director Ya'akov Huster, on behalf of the IAA, stated that a previous excavation at the site revealed a magnificent bathhouse and fish pond in almost perfect condition, next to the church. "These discoveries show that

this was a major church in a successful community in the mid-sixth century, during the reign of Justinian."

The site is located at a military installation in the northwest edge of the Gaza Strip, in an area under Israeli military and civilian control. The excavation is being conducted by the archeology officer for Judea and Samaria and the base commander, with the aid of the Employment Service as part of a public works project for the unemployed.

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Source: [Israel Government Press Office](#), March 7, 1999

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## The Church of the House of Peter

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*"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the house of Simon and Andrew." (Mark 1:29)*

Archeological investigations carried out over a 70-year period (at the beginning of the 20th century) by the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* (Jerusalem) revealed an octagonal mid-5th-century ecclesiastical structure built around an earlier one-room dwelling dated to the 1st century CE. The central octagonal shrine, enclosing a dry-wall basalt structure, was surrounded by an octagonal ambulatory similar to the ambulatory in the Rotunda of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem; or the later octagonal Islamic shrine built on the *Haram esh-Sharif* (the Temple Mount).

The room contained within the central octagonal shrine appears to have been part of an *insula* (a complex of small single-storey residential rooms and courtyards) that toward the end of the 1st century was put to public use, possibly as a *domus ecclesia*, a private house used as a church. The plastered walls of the enshrined room were found to be scratched with graffiti in Aramaic, Greek, Syriac and Latin, containing the words "Jesus", "Lord", "Christ" and "Peter".

The enshrined room is presumed to be the "House of Simon, called Peter" reported by the Spanish pilgrim, the Lady Egeria, who visited the town sometime between 381-384 during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She described in some detail how the house of "the prince of Apostles" had been made into a church, with its original walls still standing.

In the mid-5th century, this room was enshrined within an octagonal-shaped building. This was the church later described by the 6th-century

Piacenza Pilgrim who wrote, "The house of St. Peter is now a basilica." Like the nearby synagogue, the octagonal-shaped church was destroyed early in the 7th century, possibly at the time of the Persian invasion.

The present Franciscan church was built in 1990 over the site of the *Insula Sacra* to preserve the archeological finds and to permit visitors and worshippers an overview of the various architectural elements.

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### The Church of the Seat of Mary (Kathisma)

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Remains of a [Byzantine](#)-period church were discovered in 1992 near the Monastery of Mar Elias, when the highway between [Jerusalem](#) and Bethlehem was widened and a bulldozer accidentally uncovered and damaged a mosaic floor. In the first, limited excavations (October 1992 – February 1993) only a section of the western part of the church was uncovered, revealing mosaic floors which were re-covered to ensure their preservation.

Located in an ancient olive grove within the southern municipal borders of [Jerusalem](#), on land owned by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the site is bordered in the south by a terrace with an open water reservoir, known by its Arabic name, *Bir Kadismu*.

*Bir* means water cistern or reservoir, *Kadismu* preserves the Greek name of the place, Kathisma, meaning "seat."

Renewed excavations in 1997 revealed a large church built in the 5th century and restored in the 6th century. In the 8th century, it was converted into a mosque, and was destroyed shortly thereafter.

The size of the building and its sophisticated, octagonal plan indicate that this was a church of great importance. Surrounding the flat, protruding rock (the "seat"), which is its focal point, were two octagonal hallways: the inner one served as a walkway (*ambulatoria*) from which the worshippers could view the stone seat; the outer hallway was divided into rooms and four chapels. The whole church was surrounded by a square envelope, divided into rooms with mosaic floors.

Nearly all the rooms of the church were paved in colored mosaics; some had been added in the 8th century. The mosaics are in many shades of red, yellow and green in a variety of floral and geometric designs, the small tesserae laid on a firm plaster bedding.

Among the motifs are *guilloches* (braided bands) interspersed with medallions of floral designs. Depicted in the corners of the southern room of the church are four *cornucopiae* (horns of plenty), supporting acanthus leaves from which grape tendrils emanate.

According to the 6th century "Life of Theodosius", the church and the monastery of the "Old Kathisma" were built by the wealthy widow Ikelia at the time of Juvenalis, Bishop of Jerusalem (450 – 458). The account indicates that the church was built on the resting-place of Mary, halfway on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and dedicated to Mary Theotokos (God bearer). Also, that St. Theodosius himself, who lived in the 5th century, was sent for training as a monk to the monastery of the "Old Kathisma". From the 12th century onwards, a water cistern in this areas was noted as a holy site; it served as a refreshment and rest station for pilgrims traveling on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road until the end of the last century.

The site is at present covered over and not open to the public.

The excavations were directed by R. Avner on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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### Dan: The Biblical City

The mound of the biblical city of Dan is located at the foot of Mount Hermon in the northeast of the country. The fertility of the area around Dan is mentioned in the [Bible](#): *For we have seen the Land, and behold, it is very good.* ([Judges 18:9](#))

The site extends over an area of 200 dunams (50 acres). The Dan river, one of the sources of the Jordan river, emerges at the foot of the mound.

These natural advantages and its location on the main trade route from the Galilee to Damascus made Dan the most important city of the northern part of the Kingdom of Israel. Today it is one of the most attractive archeological sites in Israel. Every year since 1966, large areas have been excavated; the discoveries are of special importance for understanding the biblical narrative which repeatedly mentions the city of Dan.

#### Canaanite Dan

During the [Canaanite](#) period the city was known by the name Leshem (Joshua 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:29). During the 18th century BCE, Laish was fortified with huge man-made earthen embankments which created ramparts encircling the entire city. The ramparts of Canaanite Dan constitute one of the best examples of the defense systems common in that period.

On the eastern side of the city, an intact city gate complex was preserved, consisting of two towers flanking a recessed arched gateway. Stone steps led from the outside to the 2.4 m. wide entrances. The 18th century BCE

ramparts with the gate provided adequate defense for Canaanite Laish. During this period, the patriarch Abraham came to the city, after defeating the kings of the north who took his nephew Lot prisoner. (Genesis 14:14)

## Laish Becomes Dan

Above the destruction level of the last Canaanite city, a new occupation level was revealed, very different in architectural character and material culture. This new settlement pattern represents the conquest and settlement of the city by the tribe of Dan during the 12th century BCE. The tribe of Dan had previously occupied a small area in the western foothills of the Judean mountains. The Bible relates how 600 members of the tribe migrated northward and after conquering Laish ...*called the name of the city Dan after the name of Dan their father.* (Judges 18:29)

## The Israelite *Bamah* (High Place) of Dan

Above the spring, on the northern side of the mound, the cultic precinct of the Israelite city of Dan was exposed. The existence of a cultic center at Dan is attested to in the biblical text: ...and the children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image. (Judges 18:30) The High Place exposed at Dan was established by Jeroboam I, king of Israel at the end of the 10th century BCE, after the division of the kingdom. Jeroboam I built altars bearing a golden calf in two cities: ...*he set one in Beth-el and the other he put in Dan...and the people went up to worship...even unto Dan.* (1 Kings 12:29-30)

The sanctuary occupied an area of about 60 x 45 m. In the broad courtyard, enclosed by a wall with rooms around it, stood an altar. It was restored in the mid-9th century BCE by Ahab, king of Israel, who had a large (20 x 18 m.) bamah erected. The outer walls of the bamah were composed of large ashlar with a groove between the courses, which originally contained a wooden beam; this is reminiscent of the construction of the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem: ...*with three courses of hewn stones and one course of cedar beams.* (1 Kings 6:36; 7:12)

During the reign of Jeroboam II at the beginning of the 8th century BCE, a monumental staircase was added to the southern side of the bamah and a smaller altar was erected. In one of the rooms bordering the cultic enclosure, three iron shovels (54 cm. long) were found, which may be identified as *mahta* and *ya'eh* which were used in the Temple in Jerusalem to remove the ashes from the altar.

The bamah of Dan was destroyed when the city was captured by Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, in 732 BCE. Soon thereafter, it was restored but never regained its former importance.

An inscription from the Hellenistic period, in Greek and Aramaic, incised on a flat limestone slab, was found at the site. It mentions Zoilos (Zilas in Aramaic) who made a vow "to the god who is in Dan." This provides proof positive of the identification of the site as biblical Dan.

## The Israelite City Gate Complex

The monumental city gate complex and a long section of the wall of Israelite Dan were exposed at the foot of the southern side of the mound. A 400 m<sup>2</sup> square leads to the gate complex, which is composed of an outer and an inner gate, both built of large basalt stones. Beyond these gates, a magnificent processional road winds its way up the slope to the city.

The inner gate is the best preserved and is a good example of Israelite city gates during biblical times. It consisted of four guard rooms, two on each side of a paved passageway. The threshold, made of a large basalt stone, includes the doorstep and hinge-sockets which once supported the massive wooden doors.

Outside this gate, five undressed stones (up to 60 cm. in height) were found standing erect. They served as *matzevot* (erect stones) marking a cultic place. In this context, Josiah's deed comes to mind: *he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city...* (2 Kings 23:8)

Also outside this gate a bench was exposed, reminiscent of the place where the elders sat in biblical times, a custom referred to many times in the Bible. (Genesis 19:1; Psalms 69:13; Ruth 4:1-2)

Next to the opening of the gate itself, four squat, decorated stones served to hold four pillars supporting a canopy. It is probable that the king or judge sat here when he came to the city. *Then the king arose, and sat in the gate and they told all the people, saying behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king.* (2 Samuel 19:8)

## The Aramaic Stele

Fragments of a large inscribed basalt stele were found in the square located in front of the Israelite city gate complex. The largest of these fragments measures 32 x 22 cm. and, of the original inscription, thirteen lines have been partially preserved. The language is ancient Aramaic.

The 9th century BCE and the beginning of the 8th century BCE were marked by military conflicts between the kings of Israel and the expanding kingdom of Aram-Damascus. (1 Kings 15:20) Thus the stele was erected by one of the Aramean kings of Damascus who captured Dan - although which king cannot be ascertained as yet. It is probable that in lines 7-8 two kings of Israel and Judah, who ruled at the same time, are mentioned: Jehoram, king of Israel and Ahaziah, king of Judah, referred to as a king of the House of David. These two kings were allies and were defeated by Hazael, king of Aram-Damascus. (2 Kings 8:7-15, 28; 9:24-29; 2 Chronicles 22:5)

The stele describing Hazael's victory over his enemies was, in all probability, erected by him when he conquered Dan in the mid-9th century BCE. It is reasonable to assume that Jehoash, king of Israel, who fought the Arameans three times and defeated them (2 Kings 13:25) recovering territories previously lost, including the city of Dan, symbolically smashed the stele erected there by Hazael, king of Aram-Damascus.

Although the broken stele raises serious historical problems, it is one of the most important written finds in Israel and the first non-biblical text which mentions the House of David by name. It is hoped that more fragments of this unique stele will be uncovered in future excavations.

Excavated by A. Biran, on behalf of Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## The Eilat Region

Eilat, the southernmost city of Israel, is located on the northern shore of the Red Sea.

The location of biblical Eilat has been identified as that of present-day Akaba in Jordan, which has the only water source in the region. Akaba is located across the gulf from present-day Eilat.

Eilat is mentioned several times in the Bible, mainly in connection with King Solomon: *King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Etzion-Geber near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.* (1 Kings 9:26) The ongoing conflict between Solomon - and later kings of Judah - and the Kingdom of Edom over control of Eilat was primarily for economic reasons, since it was on the trade route from the East to the Mediterranean ports.

During the Roman and Byzantine periods, Eilat was a fort protecting the southern border of the empire against incursions of nomadic Arabian tribes. In the Middle Ages, the region became important as a crossroads for Muslim pilgrims en route to the Hejaz and its holy cities, Mecca and Medina.

At first glance the desert region of Eilat appears unsuited for human settlement. However, a large number of surveys and excavations carried out near the city since the 1980s have provided evidence of agricultural settlements, encampments and cult sites which existed there over the past several thousands of years. The sites described below are examples of periods when the region flourished; during other periods the "desert" returned and human activity became minimal.

## Prehistoric Sites in the Uvda Valley

This valley is located in the mountainous region northwest of Eilat. It is covered with rich alluvial soil from the surrounding mountains. In Neolithic times (8th-4th millennia BCE) there was more rainfall in this region than there is today. This created a savannah environment, permitting human hunter-gatherers to live on wild grains and on the meat of hunted animals (deer, gazelle, wild ass and birds).

The Nahal Ashrun site, in the eastern part of the valley, has been almost completely excavated. This site, of some 400 square meters, dates from the 8th-7th millennia BCE and consists of several dozen rounded stone dwellings, two to four meters in diameter, built close together. The inhabitants of this Neolithic village were hunters, as evidenced by hundreds of flint arrowheads and bones of undomesticated animals found in the dwellings; they also gathered wild grain, which they ground on the primitive grindstones found in the settlement.

Another cult site in the Uvda Valley, an open-air sanctuary, consists of a 12 x 12 m. square courtyard surrounded by a low stone wall. The corners of this structure correspond to the four points of the compass. Three conical basins containing ashes were found in the courtyard and in the center of a ritual cell stood sixteen 20 to 30 cm. high upright stones. Carbon-14 tests provided a 6th millennium BCE date for the site.

A short distance from the sanctuary, a group of sixteen life-size representations of animals, made of small rectangular pieces of limestone, were found embedded into the ground. Fifteen of them face east and represent leopards with square heads, huge eyes, four legs and an upward-curving tail. One horned animal faces west, the slightly twisted horns suggesting an antelope. Is it possible that this was a cult-site where supplication to the gods for protection of the shepherds and their flocks against predators (leopards) was practiced thousands of years ago?

During the Chalcolithic period (4th millennium BCE), an agricultural revolution took place in the region. Hunting and gathering of grain were replaced by cultivation of barley and wheat and by herds of domesticated goats and sheep. Small settlements with planned stone dwellings and stone-lined grain silos dug into the ground were uncovered throughout the valley. Harvesting of the grain was done with sickles of bone or wood, into which toothed flint blades had been inserted; the grain was ground on grindstones, many of which were found in the dwellings.

## The Roman Fortress at Yotvata

The fortress is located in the Arava Valley, some 40 km. north of Eilat. Built during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284 -305) as part of a line of border fortresses (*limes*) in the Negev, it was manned by cavalry and camel riders to protect the trade route against marauding Arab nomads. The fortress was a typical Roman military building D a square of 40 x 40 m., surrounded by a wall with four projecting towers at the corners. The lower part of the wall was built of stone, while the upper part was made of sunbaked mudbricks. The only gate was in the eastern wall, facing the road along the Arava Valley.

At the foot of the gate a carefully dressed limestone slab measuring 67 x 58 cm. was found, inscribed with Latin text in the rectangular frame and the two "ears", one on each of its sides. Of the nine lines of text, two and a half lines were intentionally obliterated. The inscription is dedicated to Emperor Diocletian and his three co-regents and commemorates the construction of the gate-wing of the fortress under the supervision of the governor, Priscus.

The inscription reads:

For perpetual peace  
 Diocletian Augustus and  
 Maximian Augustus and  
 Constantius and Maximianus the most noble Caesars  
 erected the wing with the gate,  
 by care of Priscus  
 the governor of the province  
 of (Syria Palestina?)  
 (left "ear") Numerous vows for the twenty year jubilee  
 (right "ear") Numerous vows for the forty year jubilee

## Settlements of the Early Arab Period

In Wadi Tawahin, about 4 kms. north of Eilat, an industrial site of the Umayyad period (7th to 8th centuries) was excavated. It consisted of several round and rectangular one-room structures. Many round diorite grinding mills and stone anvils for crushing were found in and around these structures. On the floors, and especially near the mills, a white powder was found which chemical analysis showed to contain minute

quantities of gold (one gram per one ton of rock), indicating that the site had served for processing gold.

At Ein Evrona, located a few kilometers north of Eilat, remains of a farmstead of the early Arab period (7th - 9th centuries) were excavated.

Water for irrigation was collected by means of a very sophisticated man-made system. A deep well was dug into the aquifer at the foot of the mountains; from it, a series of shafts with connecting tunnels was dug. The water flowed through the tunnels by gravitation and then along an open ditch to the cultivated fields. The water system at Ein Evrona was explored over a length of one kilometer, of which 600 meters are a subterranean tunnel, wide and deep enough for a man to walk through. The fields of the farm had enclosure walls and dams and they were prepared with much care. Three buildings were excavated, one of them consisting of two rooms.

It is assumed that this was a viable farm which probably also provided services to the caravans passing through the Arava.

The sites in the Uvda Valley were excavated by O. Yogev and U. Avner on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The fortress at Yotvata was excavated by Z. Meshel on behalf of Tel Aviv University. The settlements in Wadi Tawahin were excavated by U. Avner on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The site at Ein Evrona was excavated by Y. Porath on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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## Ein Gedi: An Ancient Oasis Settlement

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Ein Gedi is an oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth, some 400 m. below sea level. Extreme heat and aridity prevail in this desert region throughout most of the year. But perennial fresh water springs (Ein is Hebrew for spring) flow down from the high cliffs of the Judean Desert and have made permanent settlement and agriculture possible since ancient times.

Ein Gedi is mentioned in many historical sources and the abundant finds from archeological excavations which have been conducted since the 1960s make it possible to trace the long history of this unique place.

### A Chalcolithic Temple

In the Chalcolithic period (4th millennium BCE), a temple was erected at the Ein Gedi oasis which served as a cultic center for the nomadic tribes of the region. The temple compound was built on a rock terrace above the spring. It consisted of several separate single-roomed stone structures, built around a large courtyard which was surrounded by a wall. The temple complex was reached via a gateway, consisting of a square chamber with benches. The temple itself stood opposite, on the other side of the courtyard. It was rectangular in shape (20 x 2.5 m.), with stone-built benches along its walls and an altar on which animal bones and ash were found, testifying to its use as a sacrificial altar.

Only the structural remains of the abandoned temple were uncovered; researchers believe that the priests of the temple fled in the face of approaching danger, taking with them the many cult artifacts accumulated during generations of use. The temple was never used again, but due to the

arid desert conditions it has been well preserved to the present day.

## The Village at Tel Goren

During the biblical period, Ein Gedi and the surrounding desert, known as the Wilderness of Ein Gedi, were part of the territory of the Tribe of Judah. David sought refuge from King Saul at Ein Gedi. (1 Samuel 24:1)

The first permanent settlement was built on the low hill, Tel Goren, at the end of the monarchic period (second half of the 7th century BCE). The houses of the small village were built close together on terraces; each consisted of two rooms and a courtyard. In them were large clay vats for the storage of drinking water or liquids made from special plants growing in the area. Royal seal impressions, and others bearing personal names, as well as a hoard of silver pieces were found in the ruins of the village, indicating wealth and economic importance.

During the Persian period (5th-4th centuries BCE) the village grew in area. Among the buildings was a prominent, large structure (550 sq.m.), probably two stories high. It had many rooms, courtyards and storerooms in which numerous artifacts, including royal seal impressions were found. These attest to the continuing importance of the village.

In the [Hasmonean](#) and Herodian periods (first century BCE to first century CE) the Jewish settlement at Ein Gedi thrived, expanded and became a royal estate. At Tel Goren, a well-fortified citadel was built to protect the village and its agricultural products against raiding nomads. At this time Ein Gedi expanded and spread to the low, flat hill at the foot of Tel Goren. Ein Gedi was destroyed and abandoned during the [First Jewish Rebellion](#) against Rome (66-70 CE).

In renewed excavations, beginning in 1996, some 30 stone-built cells, clustered around a small spring, were found northwest of Tel Goren. The excavator suggests that this might have been a monastic site of the Essene sect, whose members lived in isolated communities in the desert near the Dead Sea during the [Roman period](#).

During the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135 CE), Ein Gedi was an important outpost of the rebels, as recorded in the Bar Kochba letters found in the Dead Sea area. Later, a Roman garrison was stationed at Ein Gedi.

During the Roman and Byzantine periods (2nd-6th century), the oasis was



an imperial estate and the settlement at En-Gedi reached the peak of its prosperity. Eusebius, 4th century bishop of Caesarea, describes Ein Gedi as a "very large Jewish village." In the course of excavations, remains of dwellings, water installations and shops along streets, were uncovered. During this period, stone terraces were constructed on the hillsides and a sophisticated water system, including storage pools and a network of irrigation channels, was developed. These measures, initiated by the central administration, made for expanded, efficient and intensive cultivation of tropical plants and the production of perfumes and medicines. Especially famous and costly was Balsam, a perfume produced from a plant that grew only in this region. To protect the cultivated areas and to control the trade route, a fortress and watch towers were built.

## The Synagogue

The synagogue at Ein Gedi dates from the [Roman-Byzantine](#) period, but it underwent several changes in the course of its use.

When first built at the beginning of the 3rd century, it was a modest, trapezoidal structure. In its northern wall, facing Jerusalem, were two openings. The floor was of simple white mosaic with a swastika pattern in black tesserae in the center. This pattern has been interpreted as a decorative motif or as a good luck symbol.

The synagogue underwent far-reaching renovations during the fourth century: The opening in the center of the northern wall was blocked and made into a square niche which probably contained a wooden Torah ark; along the opposite southern side a three-stepped bench was built; the building was divided by two rows of square pillars into a central hall with two aisles; the entrance was through three openings in the western wall.

In the mid 5th century, the synagogue underwent a further change, but its trapezoidal shape was preserved. Its dimensions were now 16 m. on the western side, 13.5 m. on the eastern side, with a width of 12.5 m. and it was two stories high. A platform (bema) containing a semi-circular niche surrounded by a chancel screen was added to the northern side of the building facing [Jerusalem](#). The whole interior of the synagogue and the pillars were covered with white plaster and painted decorations and a new, colored mosaic floor was laid. The central hall contained a mosaic carpet decorated with a pattern of four-petalled flowers; in the center is a circle with four birds and on the corners of the outer, square frame are pairs of peacocks. The decoration opposite the bema included three seven-branched

menorot (candelabra).

The floor of the western aisle, through which one entered the prayer hall, included five inscriptions. These include an Aramaic inscription mentioning the local community as well as private donors who contributed toward the construction and maintenance of the synagogue. One inscription also includes a warning and a curse:

*Warnings to those who commit sins causing dissension in the community, passing malicious information to the gentiles, or revealing the secrets of the town.*

*The one whose eyes roam over the entire earth and sees what is concealed will uproot this person and his seed from under the sun and all the people will say, Amen. Selah.*

Two inscriptions in Hebrew relate to Jewish tradition. One notes the names of the thirteen fathers of the world according to 1 Chronicles 1:1-4: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mehalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Another lists the names of the twelve signs of the zodiac and the twelve months of the Hebrew calendar; the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and the names of the three companions of Daniel: Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; and a blessing: Peace upon Israel.

The synagogue was destroyed by fire, probably during the reign of the Emperor Justinian (second half of the 6th century), a period of Jewish persecution. Among the items in the destruction debris was a unique find: a 30 cm. high seven-branched candelabrum made of bronze.

The synagogue building has recently been restored and a huge, protective tent covers it, enabling visitors to enjoy this beautiful synagogue of the Jewish community which once lived at Ein Gedi.

The Tel Goren excavations, 1961-1965, were headed by B. Mazar on behalf of the Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society; the Synagogue was excavated 1970-1972, under the direction of D. Barag and Y. Porath, on behalf of the Hebrew University, the Israel Exploration Society and the Israel Department of Antiquities (today, the Israel Antiquities Authority); renewed excavations at Ein Gedi were conducted by Y. Hirschfeld on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Exploration Society.

Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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### Ein Hatzeva: An Israelite Fortress on the Border with Edom

Remains of several Israelite fortresses at Ein Hatseva (Ein means “spring” in Hebrew) are located on a low hill in the Arava Valley, some 35 kms. south of the Dead Sea. The spring – a source of fresh water in this desert region – and the strategic position of the hill at the intersection of the main Arava road and the Negev-Edom road were the reasons for the building of consecutive fortresses on this spot over the course of about 1,000 years. Each fortress served as the military and administrative center for the region as well as a caravan station.

The ruins of Hatseva had already been surveyed at the beginning of the century and identified as the Biblical Tamar: *The border shall be even from Tamar by the waters of strife in Kadesh* (Ezekiel 48:28) and as the Roman Tamara. The identification was confirmed in the course of excavations conducted between 1987 and 1995.

#### **The 10th century BCE fortress**

This fortress, dating to the reign of King Solomon, was a small fortified structure, part of the network of fortifications built to secure the southern border of the united kingdom (before it split into Israel and Judah) and to exercise control over the trade routes leading to the Gulf of Eilat. (1 Kings 9:16-18)

#### **The 9th - 8th centuries BCE fortress**

As the previous fortress was considered inadequate to serve its purpose, a

new fortress was built and surrounded by a 50 x 50 m. fortified wall. A short time later it was expanded and became a mighty fortress with massive defenses, reaching the peak of its importance as a central component in the border defenses of the Kingdom of Judah. It served as a way station on the trade routes along which valuable goods (spices and perfumes) were transported from Arabia to this region. The fortress was a square, 100 x 100 m. structure, comparable in area to a town, such as Be'er Sheva, during that period.

The earlier, smaller fortress including its gate thus became an inner fortress. In its courtyard were located the royal stores and silos, where food for times of siege was stored; remnants of wheat and barley were found at the bottom of one of the silos.

The casemate wall of the enlarged fortress was some three meters thick, the casemates filled with packed earth for added strength; ramparts protected its foundations. Massive, protruding towers rose above the corners, and the walls between them were buttressed. A well-fortified gate in the northeastern corner of the fortress still stands today to an impressive height of three meters. It was a four-chambered gatehouse, a type common in that period, and consisted of two pairs of chambers on both sides of a four-meter-wide central passageway. A paved ramp led from outside to this gate; from its roof the approaches were visible to a great distance.

This 9th - 8th centuries BCE fortress is one of the largest and most impressive one dating to the biblical period of the kings of Judah. It was probably built at the initiative of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah (867-846 BCE), in his attempt to renew commercial links with southern Arabia via the Gulf of Akaba. (1 Kings 22:49) Another possibility is that the fortress was built by King Amaziah (798-769 BCE) or his son King Uzziah (769-733 BCE) who fought against Edom and strengthened the fortifications along the long southern border of the Kingdom of Judah. (2 Kings 3:4-15; 14:7; 2 Chronicles 26:2, 10)

The fortress was apparently damaged in the earthquake which shook Judah in the mid-8th century BCE. (Amos 1:1) The weakening of the kingdom's control in the Negev made Edomite expansion possible, which resulted in the destruction of the fortress towards the end of the 8th century BCE.

## **The 7th century BCE fortress**

The fortress at Hatseva was rebuilt on a smaller scale during this period, but only portions of its eastern side, including the wall and towers, have been preserved; most of the structure was destroyed when the Roman period fortress was constructed.

### **The 7th century BCE Edomite Temple**

A unique hoard of ritual vessels was found in a repository in the open-air cultic shrine north of the fortress. Over the years, dozens of ritual clay vessels and several stone altars accumulated in this Edomite temple. Outstanding among them are bowl-shaped incense stands on high, round, fenestrated bases; from one such bowl, tiny clay pomegranates, symbols of fertility, are suspended on hooks. Particularly impressive are the anthropomorphic stands. Limbs and facial features of human figures were molded separately and affixed to vessels, painted in reddish hues. Upon the heads of the figures are bud-decorated bowls, used for offerings and the burning of incense. One of the stands depicts two goats facing each other with two identical anthropomorphic figurines between them; a bowl to which flying doves are affixed sits atop this unusual object.

It appears that Hatseva of the 7th century BCE had been an open-air Edomite temple, which served the traders on their way from Edom to the Negev. It was probably destroyed – and the ritual objects broken – during Josiah's religious reforms at the end of the 7th century BCE. The Bible recounts (2 Kings 22-23) that during purification of the Temple in Jerusalem the *Torah* (Pentateuch) was rediscovered and that King Josiah ordered all pagan cultic sites destroyed.

### **The fortress from the Roman and Byzantine period**

This fortress was part of the network of fortifications guarding the border of the Negev, to prevent the penetration of nomadic tribes and to safeguard the profitable trade routes leading to the Mediterranean ports. Next to the fortress, a large bathhouse was constructed in the third or fourth century for use of the troops and of the travelers who stopped to rest.

After excavation, the remains of the Hatseva fortress have been partly restored and the site is now open to visitors traveling along the Arava road on their way to and from Eilat.

The excavations were directed by R. Cohen and Y. Yisrael on behalf of the



Israel Antiquities Authority.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Ekron: A Philistine City

Tel Mikne, near the traditional border between Philistia and Judah, was identified as the biblical Philistine city of Ekron. The square tel (mound) rises only a few meters above the fertile plain and consists of a small upper tel and a large lower one to the south.

Major excavations were conducted at Tel Mikne between 1981 and 1996, providing much information about the history and culture of Philistine Ekron during the 600 years of its existence (from the 12th to the end of the 7th century BCE), and proof of the identification as Ekron was found in an inscription uncovered in its temple complex.

In the second millennium BCE, Tel Mikne was a large Canaanite city, at first covering all parts of the tel, but later confined to a settlement on the acropolis, where a public building destroyed by conflagration in the 13th century BCE was uncovered. Many of its rooms were used as granaries, as evidenced by jars containing grain and carbonized foodstuffs; one jar contained figs threaded on a string, reminiscent of the biblical lump of dried figs. (1 Samuel 30:12)

Above the ruins of this Canaanite settlement, the 12th century BCE Philistine city was discovered. It was a large, well planned and fortified city which existed for 200 years and covered the entire surface of the tel.

Ekron is one of the five Philistine cities often mentioned in the Bible. The Philistines were of the Sea Peoples who had wandered, at the beginning of the 12th century BCE, from their homeland in southern Greece and the Aegean islands to the shores of the Mediterranean. The Philistines settled along the eastern Mediterranean coast at the time when the Israelites settled

in the Judean highlands. Politically independent, they preserved their traditions, which were clearly related to those of the Mycenaean culture. Architectural features and many finds indicate this relationship, especially the early Philistine pottery decorated in shades of brown and black, which later developed into the distinctive black and red decorations on white slip.

During the 12th-11th centuries BCE Philistine Ekron was a flourishing city enclosed by a sturdy, 3-meter-thick brick wall. At the center of the lower city was a royal administration center consisting of well-planned, large structures, such as palaces and temples which yielded a multitude of finds.

Of particular interest is a large, well constructed building which covers 240 sq. m. Its walls are broad, designed to support a second story and its wide, elaborate entrance leads to a large hall, partly covered with a roof supported on a row of columns. In the floor of the hall is a circular hearth paved with pebbles, as is typical in Mycenaean buildings; other unusual architectural features are paved benches and podiums. Among the finds are three small bronze wheels with eight spokes. Such wheels are known to have served as wheels for portable cultic stands in the Aegean region during this period and it is therefore assumed that this building served cultic functions.

The many artifacts of iron found in this building, including a knife with a carved ivory handle, also underscore the biblical statement on the Philistine monopoly of production of iron weaponry. (1 Samuel 13:19)

According to the Bible, Ekron was assigned to the Tribe of Judah (Jos. 15:45-46; Judges 1:18) and later, to the Tribe of Dan. (Jos. 19:43) But archeological evidence indicates a flourishing Philistine city during the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. When the Ark of the Covenant fell into Philistine hands, they displayed it in the Temple of Dagon in Ashdod and from there took it to Ekron; (1 Samuel 5:10) and after David defeated Goliath in the Elah Valley on the Philistine border with Judah, the Israelites pursued the Philistines to the gates of Ekron. (1 Samuel 17:52)

Ekron was probably destroyed by King David during his campaign against Philistia at the beginning of the 10th century BCE and over the next 300 years, Philistine Ekron was again reduced to the acropolis area of the tel. The prophet Amos prophesied its destruction in the 8th century BCE. (Amos 1:8) In 712 BCE Sargon II, King of Assyria conquered Ekron and immortalized the siege of the city in reliefs on the walls of his palace in Khorsabad.

During the 7th century BCE, Ekron was once more an important city-state and some of its kings are mentioned in the annals of the Neo-Assyrian kings. The city enjoyed economic prosperity under Assyrian rule, evidence of which is the expansion of the lower city and a new quarter to the north. At its peak it covered an area of some 85 acres and was thus one of the largest cities of biblical times. This city was carefully planned and divided into residential quarters, with a separate quarter for the rulers and the elite, and industrial and trade areas.

The economic mainstay was olive oil production and trade. The industrial buildings were built in a dense belt along the inner perimeter of the city walls. A survey has revealed some 115 oil installations, of which only a few have been excavated. The oil factory buildings consist of three rooms and are of a more or less uniform plan: one room for crushing and pressing olives, one for oil separation and storage and a front room facing the street, used for textile production. The factories had a multiple function – four months a year for olive oil production and eight months a year for making textiles.

The process of oil production involved first crushing the olives with a cylindrical stone in a large rectangular stone basin. On either side of the crushing basin stood presses, each consisting of a vat with an upper opening and a capacity of tens of liters, cut into a large stone block. Fiber baskets containing the crushed olives were placed, one on top of the other, on wooden slats which covered the vats. Then the baskets of crushed olives were pressed with great force, using a long, thick wooden beam, one end of which was inserted into a niche in the wall, the other hanging free with large, perforated, square stone weights suspended from it with rope. The oil thus produced flowed into the vat and from there was transferred to jars, where it was allowed to separate from the water residue. A sherd from one of the jars bore the inscription "oil" in black ink. It is estimated that during this period Ekron produced at least 500 tons of oil per annum, making it the largest oil production center uncovered so far in the ancient world.

The culture of the inhabitants was the local Philistine culture, which had absorbed Judahite and Phoenician influences. In Ekron many stone altars were found near the oil presses. Square in shape with a shallow depression in the upper part, they have protruding corners in the Judahite tradition and are reminiscent of the horned altars of the Bible.

At the end of the 7th century BCE the city's fortunes declined and in 604 BCE, it was conquered and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of

Babylon. As the Babylonian army approached the city, residents hid their valuables and some of these hoards were found under the debris of the destroyed houses. One hoard consists of dozens of pieces of silver jewelry, precious stones, cut pieces of silver and silver ingots which served as money in that period.

During the final season of excavations a unique, complete royal inscription was uncovered in the Babylonian destruction layer of the temple complex in the elite zone. This was a very large structure, 57 x 38 m., of clearly Assyrian architectural design, composed of a large courtyard surrounded by rooms. A long hall which probably served as a throne room, as indicated by a raised platform, separated the courtyard from a pillared sanctuary.

The inscription, engraved on a rectangular stone measuring 60 x 39 x 26 cm., was found in the cella, the holy of holiest, of the sanctuary. It reads:

*The temple which he built, 'kys (Achish, Ikausu) son of Padi son of Ysd, son of Ada, son of Ya'ir, ruler of Ekron, for Ptgyh his lady. May she bless him, and protect him, and prolong his days, and bless his land.*

The inscription is unique because it contains the name of a biblical city and five of its rulers, two of whom are mentioned as kings in texts other than the Bible. It is the only such inscription found in situ in a securely defined, datable archeological context. The title "ruler of Ekron" is proof of the identification of Tel Mikne with biblical Ekron.

The Excavations at Tel Mikne – Ekron were conducted by T. Dothan of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and S. Gitin of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem.

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## Gamla: Jewish City on the Golan

The city of Gamla on the [Golan](#) derived its name from *gamal* (Hebrew for camel), since it was situated on a hill shaped like a camel's rump. The Hasmonean ruler Alexander Yannaeus founded the city in the first century BCE and it continued to be inhabited by Jews, as attested to by Josephus Flavius (*Antiquities of the Jews* 13:394). Josephus, a Jew, was Commander of Galilee during the Jewish Revolt against Rome and in 66 CE fortified Gamla as his main stronghold on the Golan. He gives a very detailed topographical description of the city and describes the Roman siege under the command of Vespasian which led to its conquest in 67 CE. The Romans attempted to take the city by means of a siege ramp, but were turned back by the defenders; only on the second attempt did they succeed in penetrating the fortifications and conquering the city. Thousands of inhabitants were slaughtered, while others chose to jump to their deaths from the top of the cliff (Josephus, *The Jewish War* IV, 1-83). Gamla has not been rebuilt since.

Josephus' failure to provide a detailed geographical description of Gamla's location on the Golan made it difficult to locate. The identification was firmly established only in the course of archeological excavations during the 1970s.

The remains of the city are located on a rocky basalt ridge surrounded by deep gorges, with a shallow saddle separating it from the rest of the ridge, providing the city with outstanding defensive advantages. The top of the hill is narrow and pointed, creating a very steep slope in the north; the city was built on the more graduated southern slope.

The main approach road led to the eastern part of the city, where a massive



fortification wall was constructed. This wall, built of squared basalt stones, is some 6 m. thick. Several square towers situated along the wall, and a circular tower at the crest of the hill, contributed to the city's defenses. In the low-lying southern part of the wall, two square towers guarded the narrow gateway into the city. In some sections of the wall, rooms of adjacent houses had been filled with stones in order to strengthen the wall. This led researchers to hypothesize that the wall had been hastily constructed, or strengthened, on the eve of the Roman siege.

A five meter-wide breach was found at the center of the eastern wall. Scattered around it were dozens of ballista stones and arrowheads; similar finds were also uncovered in destroyed buildings inside the wall - all material evidence of the breaching of the wall and the battle between the Roman attackers and the Jewish defenders of the city.

Inside the city, near the wall, an impressive public building was uncovered and identified as the synagogue of Gamla. It is rectangular in shape (25.5 x 17 m.) and oriented northeast to southwest - in the direction of Jerusalem. Along the walls are several rows of stone-built benches. Pillars around the center of the hall supported the roof. In the courtyard, wide steps led down to a *mikve* (Jewish ritual bath) which served those who came to pray in the synagogue.

The houses of the city were built on terraces with stepped alleys between them. Well-constructed residences with large rooms, obviously of the wealthy, were uncovered in the west of the city. The large number of oil presses suggests that olives and the production of oil were the basis of the city's economy.

Evidence of fire and destruction uncovered in the buildings are vivid testimony of the drama which unfolded when the Roman Legions captured the city. But the huge mounds of collapsed stones also helped preserve Gamla's remains.

Several unique coins minted in Gamla during the Jewish Revolt were found during the excavations. On the obverse of some coins appears the word *lige'ulat* (for the redemption of) and on the reverse, *yerushalayim hakedosha* (Holy Jerusalem).

The remains of Gamla have been preserved as a national park.

Excavated by S. Gutman on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## Gezer

by [Hillel Geva](#)

The tel (mound) of the Biblical city of Gezer is located on the western slopes of the Judean Hills, midway between [Jerusalem](#) and [Tel Aviv](#). Built on a hill overlooking the fertile Ayalon Valley, the importance of this city was its strategic location at the intersection of the road from [Egypt](#), along the coastal plain northward, and the road leading to the Judean Hills and Jerusalem. The ancient name of Gezer is preserved in the Arabic name of the tel: Tel el-Jazari. Verification of the site comes from Hebrew inscriptions found engraved on rocks, several hundred meters from the tel. These inscriptions from the 1st century [BCE](#) read "boundary of Gezer."

The tel covers an area of over 30 acres. Part of this area was excavated between 1902-1909, when archeology was still in its infancy, and caused considerable damage to the site. Since the 1960s, new excavations have been conducted in several areas of the tel. The rich finds discovered in these excavations attest to the importance of the city in antiquity and constitute a unique contribution to the study of past material cultures of the Land of Israel.

## Bronze Age

Inhabitants of the first settlement established at Tel Gezer, toward the end of the 4th century BCE, lived in large caves cut into the rock. At the beginning of the Early Bronze Age (beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE), there existed an unfortified settlement covering the entire area of the tel. Following its destruction in the middle of the 3rd millennium

BCE, the tel was abandoned for several hundred years.

Then, in the Middle Bronze Age (first half of the 2nd century BCE), Gezer became one of the foremost cities in the Land of Israel. The entire tel was surrounded by a massive wall constructed of large blocks of stone 4 m. wide, with strong towers erected at intervals along it. This fortification wall (known as the "inner wall") was protected on the outside by an earthen rampart some 5 m. high, consisting of compacted alternating layers of chalk and earth covered with plaster. The city gate was located near the southwestern corner of the wall and consisted of two towers and three pairs of pilasters on which wooden gates were mounted (as was common in that period).

At the center of the northern part of the tel was an unusual cultic area. A row of ten monolithic stone steles - the tallest 3 m. high - stood at its center, oriented north-south. A large, square, stone basin that has been interpreted as serving for libations in cultic ceremonies, was found in front of one of the steles. This is a unique [Canaanite](#) temple of mazzebot (standing stones), both in terms of the number of steles and their size. The researchers suggest that the stones represent the city of Gezer and nine other Canaanite cities; rituals related to a treaty between these cities were probably performed here. The Canaanite city at Gezer was destroyed in a violent conflagration, traces of which were found in all excavation areas of the tel. It is assumed that the destruction was the result of the campaign of the Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III.

The importance of Bronze Age Gezer (2nd millennium BCE), is attested to in the many references to the city in Egyptian sources. In an inscription of Thutmose III, Gezer is mentioned as being conquered from the Canaanites in his campaign in 1468 BCE. In the archives of el-Amarna in Egypt, dating from the 14th century BCE, there are ten letters from the kings of Gezer, assuring loyalty to the Egyptian pharaoh whose vassals they were.

The Late Bronze Age (second half of the 2nd millennium BCE) is represented by a wealth of finds, many imported from the Aegean islands, Cyprus and Egypt, from both within the city and in tombs. During this period, a new fortification wall was erected around the city (the "outer wall"), which was some 1,100 m. long. This wall, 4 m.-thick, was constructed outside the earlier wall, on lower ground. This is one of the only fortifications known in the Land of Israel from the Late Bronze Age, providing further proof of the special political status of Gezer in southern

Canaan during the period of Egyptian rule. In the 14th century BCE, a palace building was constructed on the high western part of the tel, its acropolis. It appears to have had two storeys; its walls were built of stone and covered with white plaster and in the courtyard were water cisterns. Remains of another large structure, probably the house of the governor of Gezer, were found in the northern part of the tel. Toward the end of the Bronze Age, the city declined and its population diminished. The victory stele of Merneptah (from the end of the 13th century BCE) for the first time specifically mentions "Israel" as a nation, which was defeated and goes on ...Canaan was plundered... and Gezer was captured. Clear evidence of the Egyptian destruction of Gezer was found in the remains of the town.

## Iron Age

According to the Bible, Joshua and the Israelites defeated the King of Gezer (Joshua 10:33), but the Book of Judges (Judges 1:29) relates that the Tribe of Ephraim did not drive the Canaanite inhabitants from Gezer and that they remained in the city among the Israelites.

The strata which represents the 12th-11th centuries BCE of Gezer show several phases of intensive construction. A large, well-constructed building that included many courtyards and rooms on the Acropolis, where grains of wheat were found among the sherds of storage jars and grinding stones, must have been a granary. Next to it was a large plastered surface that served as a threshing floor. After it went out of use, two dwellings were built on top of the granary, each consisting of a courtyard surrounded by rooms. A street ran between the dwellings. Local, as well as Philistine, vessels found there attest to a mixed Canaanite/Philistine population at that time.

At the beginning of the 10th century BCE, Gezer was conquered and burned by an Egyptian [pharaoh](#) (probably Siamun), who gave it to [King Solomon](#) as the dowry of his daughter. Pharaoh King of Egypt had come up and captured Gezer; he destroyed it by fire, killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the town, and gave it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife. ([1 Kings 9:16](#))

King Solomon (10th century BCE) rebuilt Gezer as a royal Israelite center on the border with Philistia. The impressive series of fortifications consisted of a double wall with gates; at the center of the southern wall was the main gate with three pairs of chambers and a central passage

between them. The gate was expertly constructed of well-trimmed stones, the corners of large ashlar. It was originally two storeys high and roofed. Plastered stone benches were placed along the walls of the chambers and below its floor and the entry threshold was a deep drainage channel that carried rainwater out of the city. An outer gate, consisting of two towers, protected the approach to the main gate; from it extended a solid wall with numerous towers, built on the foundations of the "outer wall" of the previous period. Similar fortifications of this period were found at [Hatzor](#) and [Megiddo](#); they cast light on the biblical description of these three administrative centers of Solomon's kingdom: This was the the purpose of the forced labor which Solomon imposed: It was to build the House of the Lord, his own palace, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and [to fortify] Hatzor, Megiddo and Gezer. ([I Kings 9:15](#))

Gezer appears to have been destroyed soon after the death of Solomon and the division of the United Kingdom, during the campaign waged by Shishak King of Egypt against King Jeroboam in 924 BCE. ([I Kings 14:25](#))

Researchers attribute the famous Gezer Calendar, found in excavations conducted at the beginning of the 20th century, to the Solomonic period. The calendar is a small limestone tablet on which a list of agricultural chores performed during the different seasons, identified by months, is engraved. The Gezer Calendar is regarded as one of the earliest paleo-Hebrew texts known, and testifies to the use of Hebrew writing as early as the 10th century BCE.

The material culture found at Gezer shows that after the division of the kingdom, Gezer was part of the [Kingdom of Israel](#), on the border with the [Kingdom of Judah](#). During those years, the Solomonic fortifications continued to defend the city, though the gate was rebuilt as a gateway with two pairs of chambers only. It was probably during this period that a water system was constructed, similar to those found at Hatzor and Megiddo. It consisted of a wide shaft, 7 m. deep, with a staircase inside the city, and a tunnel at a 45-degree angle which led down to the water source; its purpose was to guarantee the water supply of the city in time of siege.

The conquest of Gezer by the Assyrian ruler Tiglath Pileser in 733 BCE is depicted in a stone relief found in the ruins of the palace of the kings of [Assyria](#) at Nimrud in Mesopotamia. In this depiction, a battering ram is seen hitting the wall of the city while some of the town's defenders on the wall surrender to the Assyrian Army. The name of the conquered city, in



cuneiform, is Gazaru. Later on it served as the center of the Assyrian administration in the Coastal Plain. Two clay cuneiform tablets were uncovered in the excavation; they are documents from the year 651 BCE and are typical of Assyrian texts dealing with the purchase of land.

By the end of the Iron Age, when Gezer was under the control of the Kingdom of Judah, the city was no longer a major center. During the 5th-4th centuries BCE, it was part of the Persian province of Yehud. In 142 BCE, Simon the Hasmonean conquered Gezer and built a royal palace there. (I Maccabees 13:43-48) The Iron Age fortifications were restored and semi-circular towers added. Evidence of a Jewish population during this period includes several stepped pools for ritual bathing (mikva'ot). During the reign of [King Herod](#), Gezer lost its importance as a border town and until the end of the [Second Temple](#) period (70 CE), it was a private estate, its boundaries marked by inscriptions on rocks, "boundary of Gezer."

Tel Gezer was first excavated by R.A.S. Macalister. New excavations were conducted from 1964 to 1973, in 1984 and in 1990. These were first directed by G.E. Wright, later by W.C. Dever and J.D. Seger on behalf of the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Golan - A Unique Chalcolithic Culture

by [Hillel Geva](#)

Remains of an unknown culture of the Chalcolithic period (4th millennium [BCE](#)) have been discovered in the [Golan](#) in the past thirty years. This culture has unique characteristics, but also shares features common to the Chalcolithic culture that flourished in other parts of the [Land of Israel](#). So far some 25 sites have been found in the Golan, and several have been excavated. Most of the sites are located in the central Golan, east and northeast of the [Sea of Galilee](#).

The Golan is a region of basaltic rock with plentiful rainfall, and its extensive pasturelands have attracted transient herders in all periods of time. During the Chalcolithic period, they settled in small permanent villages and in isolated farmsteads, built on the banks of valleys with small perennial springs.

The villages consisted of between 20 to 40 dwellings, built on broad terraces in several rows of chain formation, sharing a common wall. The typical dwelling was rectangular, measuring 15 x 6 m. with the entrance in one of the long walls. The house itself was lower than the surrounding ground and was reached by descending several steps. The walls were particularly thick, built of large, unhewn basalt stones found nearby; the floors were also of stone, with an occasional stone-lined silo built into them. The interior of the house consisted of a main living room and a small room next to it, sometimes sub-divided to serve for storage of food and equipment. This subdivision also facilitated roofing the house with short wooden beams, since trees do not grow tall in the [Golan](#). The roof

was supported by a row of wooden columns positioned across the main room. Branches of trees and bundles of reeds were placed over the wooden structure and possibly also covered with skins.

Numerous artifacts were found in these Chalcolithic-period houses of the Golan. Pottery was simple and hand made, using the reddish-brown clay with many grits from the volcanic soil of the Golan. Jars, bowls, jugs and spouted large bowls were found, many of them decorated with bands of impressed rope, or with incised or pierced horizontal and diagonal lines, circles or spirals. The assemblage contained a large number of storage jars for food and also spindle whorls of fired clay, which attest to widespread spinning and weaving activities.

Vessels made of local basalt were also very common in this culture. Forms include deep flower-pot shaped bowls, shallow bowls, basins and vessels for grinding. Tools were also made of basalt: hammers, hoes and axes. Flint was used for borers, fan-shaped scrapers and sickle blades, which were inserted into handles of bone or wood.

The Chalcolithic population in the Golan relied for survival on agriculture and herding. Animal bones found in the excavations attest to domesticated sheep and goats, but also to game animals as food sources. The botanical findings indicate that the inhabitants consumed wheat, peas and lentils, amongst other crops. Olive wood was widely used in construction and olives were, undoubtedly, a food source. The excavators also believe that some of the basalt and pottery vessels were used for the production and storage of olive oil.

## **Figurines of household gods**

Characteristic of the Golan Chalcolithic culture are pillar figurines made of basalt, of which some 50 have been found to date. The figurines measure 20-25 cm. in height, are carefully sculpted and variously decorated. Their form is a round pillar with a shallow offering bowl on top, with sculpted human facial features: eyes, ears and protruding nose, apparently symbolizing the breath of life. Several have pronounced horns and even goat beards. These pillar figurines were part of the local household cult; by offering grain, seeds, olives, milk and milk products in the bowls on top of the figurine, the family hoped to satisfy the gods and receive their blessing. These household figurines are of great value for understanding the beliefs and the cult of the Chalcolithic period, as well as its art.

## Summary

It is not clear why the Golan Chalcolithic culture came to an end. Some claim that climatic changes impaired the subsistence farming of the region. The inhabitants abandoned their homes, took the small objects necessary for their daily lives with them, and left behind the heavy vessels which they could not carry. A gap in the settlement of the Golan, which lasted several hundred years, followed.

The survey and archeological excavation of the Chalcolithic remains in the Golan were carried out by C. Epstein on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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## The Golan: Rogem Hiri

The megalithic complex of Rogem Hiri (Rujm al-Hiri in Arabic, meaning “stone heap of the wild cat”) is located in the central [Golan](#), some 16 km. east of the Sea of Galilee, on a desolate plateau of basalt boulders. Since its discovery in a survey of the [Golan](#) in the late 1960s, this mysterious site has aroused the curiosity of archeologists. Between 1988 and 1991, archeological excavations and research were conducted in order to establish facts and determine the time of its construction and its function.

Rogem Hiri is a monumental construction of local basalt fieldstones of various sizes. It consists of two architectural units: four concentric circles enclosing a central, round cairn. The outer, largest circle is about 500 m. long and 156 m. in diameter. The walls are of varying width, of up to 3.5 m., and have been preserved to a height of 2.5 m., obliterated in some parts by stone collapse. Several radial walls connect the circular walls, creating a labyrinth-like structure which has only two entryways, one facing northeast, the other southeast.

At the center of the circles is a cairn, an irregular heap of stones. It is 20-25 m. in diameter and preserved to a height of 6 m. The cairn consists of a central mound of stones surrounded by a lower belt, which gives it the appearance of a stepped, truncated cone. A geophysical survey using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) revealed the pile of stones to be hollow. A built burial chamber, with a narrow corridor leading to it, was discovered there. The chamber is round, roughly 2 m. in diameter, built of large stone plates arranged on top of each other, but slightly slanting inwards. It was covered by two massive slabs of basalt, each weighing over 5.5 tons, which created a semi-corbelled dome over the burial chamber.

Rogem Hiri is one of the most intriguing archeological sites in Israel. A variety of theories concerning the function of this structure, which has no parallel in the Middle East, had been proposed prior to the current research: a religious center; a defensive enclosure; a large burial complex; a center for astronomical observation; and a calendrical device. The structure was even identified as the tomb of Og, King of the Bashan and last of the giants. (Deuteronomy 3:11)

Rogem Hiri was also regarded as an astronomical observatory – a sort of Middle Eastern Stonehenge. This theory is supported by the fact that the eastern side, facing the rising sun, was built with much greater care. Also, the only two entryways are located on that side, the northeastern one roughly oriented towards the solstitial sunrise on 21 June.

The archeologists who excavated the site offer other possible explanations. According to one view, the concentric circles were built during the Early Bronze Age, in the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE, as a cultic and ceremonial center, where nomadic people in the process of becoming sedentary gathered annually; and that much later, during the late Bronze Age (1400 – 1300 BCE) the cairn containing the burial chamber was added (it was robbed of its contents in antiquity and only a few artifacts were found, including gold earrings and bronze arrowheads). Measurements revealed that the cairn is not located in the center of the concentric circles, supporting the view that the stone pile was a later addition.

According to another view, the architecture of Rogem Hiri proves that both the concentric circles and the cairn were parts of a single structure. There is no evidence for a cultic structure below the cairn and artifacts typical of known cultic centers of that period were not found. Rogem Hiri was therefore a monumental commemorative tomb – the mausoleum of an Early Bronze Age leader in the Golan; the tomb was cleared of its early burial remains in the Late Bronze Age, and then reused for burial. The size of the site reflects centralized organization and leadership capable of carrying out an engineering project of such proportions (it is estimated that 42,000 tons of stones had to be transported!).

The riddle of Rogem Hiri remains unsolved. Those who built it some 5,000 years ago left the stage of history and took with them the secrets of this unusual site.

The excavations were directed by Y. Mizrahi and M. Zohar, as part of the Land



of Geshur Regional project headed by M. Kochavi, of the Institute of  
Archeology, Tel Aviv University

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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### The Greek Orthodox Church of the Seven Apostles



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*"Early in the morning, Jesus stood by the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus." ([John](#) 21:4)*

The small, red-domed Greek Orthodox Church of the Seven Apostles (built in 1931) marks the site to which the village of Capernaum was relocated following the earthquake in 746. The church is dedicated to the seven apostles (Simon called Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, "and two other disciples") mentioned in the Gospel of John when Jesus appears again to his disciples "by the Sea of Tiberias".

Archeological excavations carried out at four locations on the site between 1978-82 revealed the foundations of residential dwellings with the same black basalt dry-stone walling as in earlier constructions in Capernaum.

Of special note are the remnants of a two-meter-wide basalt wall along the

shoreline. This wall may have been part of a quay along the entire lakefront of the village. A 20-meter-wide break in the wall near the Greek Orthodox church was framed by two stonework jetties extending at right angles into the lake. This would have provided both sheltered anchorage and a slip for hauling boats out of the water.

An [ancient fishing boat](#) built sometime in the 1st century BCE was discovered in 1986 during an unusually low water level in Lake Kinneret. The 8-meter-long boat had been preserved in the mud of the lake-bed, and was found to contain various implements, including an oil lamp and a cooking pot. Dubbed the "Jesus boat," the craft has been carefully preserved and is now on display at nearby Kibbutz Ginosar.

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# Haifa University Archeologist Uncovers World's Oldest Bedding

(June 2004)

A team of botanists and archeologists led by a [University of Haifa](#) researcher have uncovered prehistoric floor coverings that constitute the oldest evidence of bedding for the sleeping and/or sitting area.

According to Dr. Dani Nadel, the Haifa archeologist in charge of the excavation, this is the first time that such bedding, along with a "modernly" organized hut floor, has been found.

Nadel and his team have been exploring Ohalo II, a 23,000-year-old fishermen-hunters-gatherers camp on the shores of the [Sea of Galilee](#) (Lake Kinneret). The site was uncovered several years ago after the lake had receded drastically because of years of little rainfall in the region.

The oval-shaped "mat" that was found is made of grass. Found in the largest of the six brush huts uncovered, the most ancient in the world, the floor covering measures 4.5 meters long. It was located close to the hut wall, around a central hearth.

The mat was meticulously crafted from bundles of grass. The charred stems and leaves were covered with a thin, closely pressed layer of clay. According to Nadel, this was apparently intended to preserve the structure and order of the sheaves.

The Haifa University-led excavation at the site has also revealed the

vegetarian diet of the camp inhabitants. Well-preserved seeds and even fruit have been discovered. Almost no other site dating to this period anywhere in the world has produced such finds.

According to Nadel, these finds are important for understanding the economic basis and types of seasonal food of humans at the height of the last Ice Age. Large quantities of charred material were found in the huts and near campfires at the site. Some 90,000 seeds and fruit from more than 100 species of trees and plants have been identified so far. Among the grains, wild wheat and barley stand out. These were among the first that humans cultivated at a much later period.

The finds, he continued, also testify to the fact that both food and incendiary material were brought to the camp from the Mediterranean groves, the lake shore, and the large salt flats that spread over the region.

Ohalo II, Nadel commented, is one of the best preserved sites of the period in the world, presenting one of the most detailed contributions to the reconstruction of everyday life in this period.

For background on the Ohalo II excavations, see <http://ohalo.haifa.ac.il/>

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### Hamat Gader: Baths of Medicinal Hot Springs

Hamat Gader (meaning "hot springs of Gadara") is located in the Yarmuk River valley, some 7 km. east of the Sea of Galilee. There are several mineral springs in the valley, with waters of up to 50° C. The ancient name of Hamat Gader is preserved in the Arab name of the mound located near the site, Tel Bani, a corruption of the Greek word meaning "baths".

Baths were built at Hamat Gader as early as the 2nd century, but they became popular only during the Byzantine period, in the 5th and 6th centuries. Some of the buildings were damaged by an earthquake in the 7th century and restored by the Umayyad caliph who ruled from Damascus. Eventually, in the 9th century, the baths were abandoned and a thick layer of silt covered the ruins.

The curative powers of the Hamat Gader springs, famous since ancient times, were described by the historian Eunapius who visited them in the 4th century:

*Gadara, a place which has warm baths in Syria, inferior only to those at Baia in Italy, with which no other baths can be compared.*

Among the visitors to the baths during the Roman-Byzantine period were many Jews, and also Jewish sages who made mention of the baths in the Talmud. A synagogue for their use was built nearby.

Dozens of Greek inscriptions, as well as some in Arabic, were found on



marble and stone plaques incorporated into the floors and walls of the bath buildings. These provide information about the Byzantine rulers and about wealthy individuals who contributed to the cost of construction and renovation work, for which cures were wished on them. Dedicatory inscriptions mention the empress Eudocia (421-460), the Caesar Anastasius (491-518) and the Umayyad caliph Mu'awiyya (661-680). An inscription from the reign of Empress Eudocia, on a 1.81 x 0.71 m. marble slab, bears the empress' name and praises the springs and baths of Hamat Gader, mentioning 16 buildings, including halls, pools and fountains.

Remains of the various structures at Hamat Gader were first studied and partially excavated in 1932. Extensive excavations which exposed a large portion of the baths complex were conducted during several seasons, beginning in 1979.

The exposed structures have recently been restored and opened to visitors. Thus today, as in antiquity, one can take the plunge, enjoy the hot springs and take advantage of their curative properties.

## **The Roman Bath Complex**

The bath complex was reached from the north, via a 12-m. wide paved street, which connected the various buildings of Hamat Gader. A long, paved passageway, with decorated arches supported by pillars, led to the baths. The building complex covers an area of over 500 sq. m. and offered the visitor a variety of hot water pools and halls, probably with different functions. The buildings are exceptionally well preserved to a height of several meters, the walls are constructed of local basalt stone or well-trimmed limestone. The pools were each in a separate hall; these were connected to one another by passageways which enabled the bathers to pass from one pool to another, gradually adjusting to the differences in water temperature, until reaching the pool closest to the spring, with the hottest water. The pools are of different shapes and sizes, with steps around the edges for comfortable access. Paved walkways around the pools led to halls with niches for individual bathtubs.

The pools were filled and drained by a complex system: hot water was brought from the spring through wide pipes of interlocking stone sections and from them, lead pipes carried the water to and from the pools. An unroofed, cool water pool over 50 m. long, was surrounded by 32 rectangular marble fountains, each some 60 cm. high, the sides facing the pool decorated with sculptured human and animal heads; from their

mouths, water poured into the pool. The sculptures were found broken and defaced, obviously the work of iconoclasts.

## The Synagogue

The synagogue uncovered on the mound south of the baths was built in the 5th–6th century for use by the many Jews who came to the baths. The synagogue is located in a complex of buildings with paved rooms and courtyards leading to the synagogue. Benches along the walls of a large room next to the synagogue indicate that it was used for study, or that it was a women's court.

The almost square synagogue hall, measuring 13.90 x 13 m., faced south, toward Jerusalem. Three rows of columns divided the hall into a central space surrounded by aisles. The southern wall, facing Jerusalem, had a semi-circular niche (apse), in front of which was an elevated platform (bema) to which steps led.

The synagogue was paved with mosaics, mainly in geometric patterns. Three carpets – in geometric and floral designs creating rhombuses containing roses and pomegranates – covered the center of the synagogue hall. The carpet in front of the bema is the most elaborate, with two cypress trees and two lions facing the center and a wreath surrounding a dedicatory inscription which ends as follows:

*...whose acts of charity are constant everywhere and who  
have given here five coins of gold. May the King of the  
Universe bestow the blessing upon their work. Amen. Amen.  
Selah.*

The excavations of the bath complex was conducted by Y. Hirschfeld and G. Solar on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Exploration Society and the Israel Antiquities Authority

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Hatzor

The *tel* (mound) of the ancient city of Hatzor is the largest and richest archeological site in Israel. It is located in the upper Galilee, 14 km. north of the Sea of Galilee.

The mound rises only slightly above the fertile plain surrounding it and consists of two parts: a lower tel with an area of some 170 acres and the acropolis to the south with an area of about 30 acres.

Many large areas of both mounds were excavated during 1955 and 1958, again in 1968 – 1969; excavation was resumed in 1990, on the upper *tel* only.

Hatzor was the largest Canaanite city of the 2nd millennium BCE. It maintained trade links with Mari on the Tigris River, as mentioned in 18th century BCE documents found there. Fourteenth century BCE documents, from the El Amarna archive in Egypt, also mention Hatzor as an important city in Canaan; they also include the name of its king, Abdi-Tirshi, who had sworn loyalty to the pharaoh of Egypt. He is the only Canaanite ruler referred to as "king" in those documents. The excavators hope that comparable archives will be found in Hatzor.

Thus far, only several documents in cuneiform script on fragments of small clay tablets, have been found in the upper city of Hatzor. They are similar to the Mari and El Amarna documents, both in content and date. One of the Hatzor documents mentions Ibni Addu, whose name also appears in a Mari document. In the semitic languages, the name is reminiscent of that of the last Canaanite king of Hatzor, Yavin, known from the Bible. Texts of an administrative and economic nature discovered in Hatzor strengthen the

assumption that the palace now being excavated on the acropolis will eventually yield a wealth of such documents.

## The Canaanite City

The fortified Canaanite city of Hatzor (19th – 13th centuries BCE) comprised both the upper tel (acropolis) and the lower tel (lower city). The rectangular shape of the lower mound resulted from the huge earthen rampart which was constructed at the beginning of this period along the western and northern sides of the city. The eastern side, above a steep slope, was protected only by a wall; here two city gates were located with gatehouses consisting of two rectangular towers with a passage between them, narrowed by three pairs of pilasters that supported doors.

The fortified area of lower Hatzor contained dwellings and public buildings. A very large Canaanite temple was uncovered in the northern part of the city. It appears that four consecutive temples were built one on top of the other, between the 17th and 13th centuries BCE. The first of these was modest, the last attained its greatest size in the 14th century BCE. It consists of three large rooms built in a row, from south to north. The entrance hall in the south leads to a central hall, behind which was the holy of holies, the northernmost and the largest room of the temple. In its northern wall is a rectangular niche in which the statue of a god may have stood. This Canaanite temple reminds one of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, which, according to the biblical description, also included three rooms in a row.

A unique technique was employed in building this Canaanite temple at Hatzor: the inner sides of the walls were lined with orthostats, trimmed rectangular basalt slabs, which strengthened the brick walls. A large basalt orthostat, with a lion depicted on it in relief, was found; it is probably one of a pair that stood on either side of the entrance. In the ruins of this temple, which was destroyed by fire, a variety of statues, cult vessels, libation tables and a deep basalt bowl decorated with running-spiral motif were found. Of special interest is a square basalt altar for burning incense. On one of its sides, a circle with a cross in the center – the divine symbol of the Canaanite storm god – is carved in low relief.

In the western part of the lower city, a small 14th century BCE temple built into the earthen rampart was uncovered. At the back of the building stood a row of basalt steles, one with a pair of hands raised in prayer and above them a crescent and disk, presumed to represent divine attributes. Also

found here – of basalt – were statuettes of a seated figure and of a lion.

The most important discovery of recent years was the Canaanite palace on the acropolis. It is the largest and most elaborate of this period so far discovered in Israel.

At the center of a large courtyard in front of the palace stood a raised platform, probably for cultic use. Two enormous stone bases, which once supported massive columns, were found on the facade of the entrance hall, from which several steps led up to a 12 x 12 m. room – assumed to have been the throne room.

The walls of the palace were up to 3 m. thick, built of bricks reinforced with cedar-wood beams, their bases lined with basalt orthostats. Since the palace and the building style bear similarities to those found in countries to the north of Israel, it is assumed that during this period Hatzor had cultural and economic ties with these lands.

The palace was destroyed with the rest of Hatzor, apparently in a conflagration that fired the bricks into very hard material. The remains of the Hatzor palace were covered with ash and debris which contained fragments of Egyptian sculptures, ivory artifacts, jewelry, bronze figurines and statues and more. One stone statue, cracked by fire and broken into many pieces, was over one meter high, thus making it the largest statue from the Bronze Age so far found in Israel.

Northeast of the palace was a Canaanite temple with clear north-Syrian architectural influences. It consists of a single large hall with a courtyard in front of it. This was probably the private, royal temple.

The uncovered fortifications, elaborate palace, temples and buildings, together with the written documents and other finds, indicate Hatzor's importance among the Canaanite city-states of the 2nd millennium BCE. It illuminates the biblical passage which describes Hatzor as "the head of all those kingdoms." (Joshua 11:10) This flourishing city was totally destroyed by fire at the end of the Late Bronze Age (around 1200 BCE). The conflagration is mentioned in the Bible, emphasizing the complete destruction of Hatzor during the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites: But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hatzor only; that did Joshua burn. (Joshua 11:13)

## **The Israelite City**



For some 200 years after the destruction of the Canaanite city, only an insignificant Israelite settlement existed here. A royal city was founded on the upper *tel* in the 10th century BCE, during King Solomon's reign, as recounted in the Bible: *And this is the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the Lord, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hatzor, Megiddo and Gezer.* (1 Kings 9:15) It is noteworthy that fortification systems and administration buildings identical to those found at Hatzor have also been found at Megiddo and Gezer.

A casemate wall surrounded only the western half of the upper *tel*. The eastern gate consisted of three pairs of chambers and two outward projecting towers. At the western edge of the city stood a mighty fortress, probably serving also as the residence of the governor appointed by the king to rule over the northern part of the kingdom.

In the 9th century BCE, during the rule of King Ahab, Israelite Hatzor became a great, royal city, grandly planned. The eastern part of the upper *tel* was surrounded by a solid wall and the early casemate wall in the west was filled in with stone, resulting in a massive, strong and uniform wall surrounding the entire city. A new citadel measuring 25 x 21 m. with two-meter thick walls was erected in the western part of the city. It had two long halls with rooms on three sides and a staircase of long, trimmed stones which led to the second story. The main, western entrance to the citadel consisted of two stone pilasters bearing carved proto-aeolic capitals which once supported the doorway's lintel. Such capitals, with two large, carved volutes, are among the hallmarks of Israelite royal architecture.

Within the city and near the gate, a variety of administrative and private structures were built. A storehouse structure with two rows of monolithic stone pillars that supported a roof is noteworthy among these. This building was dismantled in the renewed excavations and reconstructed nearby so as to allow the excavation to continue to lower levels.

A water system of amazing size and engineering complexity was constructed at Hatzor during the reign of King Ahab. It is located in the south of the city, opposite the natural springs in the valley at the base of the mound. The main component of the water system is a broad, rectangular shaft, cut into the rock to a depth of 30 m. A 3 m. wide winding staircase along the walls, leads to the bottom. The lowest flight of stairs continues in a southwesterly direction into a sloping, 4 m. high and 25 m. long tunnel, which leads to a water chamber cut into the aquifer. This unique water



system ensured the continued water supply to the city even in time of siege, hidden from the enemy's view.

In the 8th century BCE Israelite Hatzor lost its importance and declined. It was conquered by Tiglat Pileser III of Assyria in 732 BCE. (2 Kings 15:29) Traces of the destruction have been found all over the city. Hatzor never regained its past glory; only a small settlement continued to exist there, until that too was abandoned in the Hellenistic period.

Excavations of Hatzor between 1955-58 and in 1968 were conducted by Y. Yadin on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The excavations carried out since 1990 (the Selz Foundation Hatzor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin), are directed by A. Ben-Tor on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and M.T. Rubiato of the Complutense University of Madrid in cooperation with the Israel Exploration Society and the Rothschild Foundation

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Herodian: King Herod's Palace - Fortress

Some 12 km. south of [Jerusalem](#), on a hill shaped like a truncated cone that rises 758 m. above sea level, stood Herodium, the palace-fortress built by [King Herod](#). It had a breathtaking view, overlooking the Judean Desert and the mountains of Moab to the east, and the Judean Hills to the west.

Herodium is described in great detail by the 1st century Jewish historian [Josephus Flavius](#):

*This fortress, which is some sixty stadia distant from Jerusalem, is naturally strong and very suitable for such a structure, for reasonably nearby is a hill, raised to a (greater) height by the hand of man and rounded off in the shape of a breast. At intervals it has round towers, and it has a steep ascent formed of two hundred steps of hewn stone. Within it are costly royal apartments made for security and for ornament at the same time. At the base of the hill there are pleasure grounds built in such a way as to be worth seeing, among other things because of the way in which water, which is lacking in that place, is brought in from a distance and at great expense. The surrounding plain was built up as a city second to none, with the hill serving as an acropolis for the other dwellings.*  
(War I, 31, 10; Antiquities XIV, 323-325)

According to [Josephus](#), Herodium was built on the spot where [Herod](#) won a victory over his [Hasmonean](#) and Parthian enemies in 40 BCE. (Antiquities XIV, 352-360) To commemorate the event, the king built a

fortress and a palace there, which he named after himself. He also built, in the plain below the hill, an administrative center for the region, which had not been previously settled. Here, at Herodium, he also had a royal tomb built for himself; [Josephus](#) describes (War I, 33, 8; Antiquities XVII, 196-199) the king's funeral procession and burial at Herodium.

Herodium, together with Machaerus (in today's Hashemite [Kingdom of Jordan](#)) and [Masada](#) near the [Dead Sea](#), were the last three fortresses held by Jewish fighters after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Herodium was conquered and destroyed by the [Romans](#) in 71 CE. (War VII, 6, 1)

The site was identified in the 19th century; its name in Arabic, Jabal Fureidis, is probably a corruption of the ancient name, Herodis (mentioned in the Bar Kochba letters). Remains of the palace-fortress on the hilltop have been excavated by several expeditions since the early 1960s. Excavation of the buildings at the foot of the hill has been conducted intermittently since 1972 to the present time.

Herodium was built in two separate areas, each with a distinct function: a circular fortress, including an elaborate palace, surrounded by a wall with towers on top of the hill; and Lower Herodium, in the plain to the north, with a group of royal buildings around a large pool.

## The Palace-Fortress

The combination of fortress and palace is a uniquely Herodian innovation, which he repeated on several other sites, including [Masada](#). At Herodium, a circular palace-fortress was constructed on top of a hill, which rises 60 m. above its surroundings. The fortifications consist of two concentric walls with a 2.5 m. space between them. the outer walls measure 62 m. in diameter. The fortification was originally about 30 m. high, with seven stories. Two of these stories were underground foundations, strengthened with barrel-vaulted ceilings, and the superstructure of five stories was considerably higher than the palace courtyard. Wooden ceilings separated the stories, which were used for storage and as quarters for soldiers and servants. Huge towers projected from the walls on all four sides. The eastern tower - the largest - was a massive, round tower on a solid stone base and measured 18 m. in diameter. It had several upper stories with elaborate rooms, probably for the use of the royal entourage. This eastern tower rose above the entire fortress, its roof commanding a panoramic view; it also served as a hiding place in times of danger.

The other three towers were semi-circular, 16 m. in diameter, and their upper stories served as storage spaces and living areas. After construction of the fortification around the hill, an earth rampart of considerable height was laid against the outer foundations of the fortification, artificially raising the hill and giving it a conical shape. The entry-gate to the fortress, in the northeast, was reached via a straight, steep staircase within a corridor built into the earthen rampart.

Cisterns beneath the fortress, filled with rainwater which was channeled from above, assured its water supply. In addition, three very large cisterns were cut into the slope outside the fortress (near the entrance to the staircase) and rainwater was channeled into them from the hillside. Water was drawn from these cisterns by servants, who carried it to the cistern on the top of the hill, which was probably always kept full.

Herod's private palace, of modest dimensions, stood within the fortification. It was splendidly appointed, with floors of colored tiles, mosaics and wall paintings and included every imaginable feature for comfort. The eastern part of the palace was a garden, in a 41 x 18 m. atrium surrounded on three sides by porticos, its columns adorned with Corinthian capitals. The western portion of the palace had two stories. Its ground floor included:

- a hall (*triclinium*), with a roof supported by four columns (stone benches were added on three of its sides by Jewish fighters during the Jewish Revolt against Rome [66-70 CE], who converted it into a synagogue);
- a cruciform courtyard with rooms at its corners;
- a small bathhouse (the preserved domed roof in one of its rooms is the earliest example of a dome found to date in Israel).

## Lower Herodium

On the plain below the fortress to the north, Lower Herodium covered an area of some 38 acres. It was well planned, the buildings and gardens placed on a north-south axis. The buildings were constructed around a large pool (70 x 46 m., and 3 m. deep), which was filled by water from the aqueduct especially built to carry water from the springs at Artas near Solomon's pools to the west. The pool was plastered to prevent seepage and used as the main reservoir of Herodium, as well as for swimming. The foundations of a round building (15 m. in diameter) were found in the center of the pool. It once had a roof supported by a row of columns and

was probably a pavilion for relaxation and entertaining. The pool was surrounded by extensive, well-tended gardens. Six metre-wide porticos, consisting of columns adorned with Ionic capitals surrounded the gardens on three sides, to a length of about 250 m. Halls, each measuring 110 x 10 m., were built along the eastern and the western sides of the pool. The eastern hall was built on a 13 m.-wide and extremely high terrace wall. The octagonal room at the center of the western hall had walls decorated with pilasters and frescos. It is assumed that this room served as a reception hall, or perhaps even as the king's throne room when he resided at Herodium.

The pool complex was surrounded by buildings of various functions. In the north was a large structure that included storage areas and servants quarters. In the northwest a warehouse was uncovered and fragments of dozens of ceramic storage jars were found among the debris. In the southwest a large bathhouse was excavated, which probably served the royal entourage and the king's guests. It comprised a number of rooms and pools, a *caldarium* (hot room) heated by the hypocaust system (the floor was raised on supports, allowing hot air to circulate below the floor, thus heating the room). The bathhouse walls were decorated in painted square patterns and in imitation marble. The floors were paved with colored mosaics in geometric and floral patterns, as well as with pomegranates, grapevines and grape clusters.

## The Monumental Building

The building dubbed "the monumental building" by the excavators, stood south of the pool, at the western edge of a level, man-made area measuring 350 x 30 m. In this building there is an elaborate square hall, open on the side facing the level area; it measures 12 x 9 m. and is preserved to a height of 7 m. The particularly thick walls of the hall are built of well-cut ashlar, with niches between pilasters. Architectural elements, with decorations characteristic of elaborate burial monuments in Jerusalem, and the ritual bath found here, have prompted the suggestion that the building was part of [King Herod's](#) mausoleum. The room described could have served as a *triclinium* for ceremonies in memory of the king. The man-made level area in front of the building perhaps served as a plaza for the royal funeral procession described by [Josephus](#). (War I, 33, 9) To the disappointment of the excavators the tomb itself has not yet been found. It may well be hidden nearby, deep in the slopes of the fortress of Herodium.

As the excavation progressed, extensive restoration was carried out on the

structures of Herodium. It is possible today to walk on a comfortable path to the top of the fortress, to climb its walls and to enjoy, as in the past, the view of the surrounding region. One may also descend to the 300 m.-long tunnels, cisterns and rock-cut spaces under the hill. These underground passages were cut as hiding places by Jewish fighters of the [Bar Kokhba Rebellion](#) (132-135) when Herodium was once more besieged by the Roman army. And the large pool at Lower Herodium is, as in times of old, once more surrounded by (restored) porticos.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## Jericho - The Winter Palace of King Herod

by [Hillel Geva](#)

The oasis of [Jericho](#), some 25 km. east of [Jerusalem](#), lies in the Jordan Valley, about 390 m. below sea level and has warm and pleasant winters. It was, therefore, chosen as the site for the winter palaces of the kings of the [Hasmonean](#) dynasty, and of [King Herod](#), in the Second Temple period. In this plain with fertile soil and an abundance of water from nearby springs, rare plants producing aromatic essences and spices, were grown. Most famous among these was the opobalsamum plant, whose oil was among the costliest substances in the ancient world, and very profitable to the growers.

The palaces were situated below the high cliffs of the Judean Desert at the entrance to Wadi Qelt - west of the Jericho oasis - about a day's horseback riding from Jerusalem. They were planned for rest and recreation, but also as administrative centers; the proximity to Jerusalem made it possible for the monarch to efficiently deal with affairs of state during his winter sojourn there. Regular water supply, via aqueduct from the springs in Wadi Qelt (wadi = dry riverbed), was ensured. The water filled reservoirs and swimming pools and was used to irrigate the palace gardens as well as tens of acres of agricultural land belonging to the crown, where dates and costly aromatic plants and spices were grown. The palaces and the road from Jericho to Jerusalem were protected by the fortresses of Doq (Qarantal) and Cypros, built atop the cliffs at the entrance to Wadi Qelt.

The remains of the palaces, including the two artificial mounds known to local inhabitants as Tulul Abu al-Alaiq, cover an extensive area on both sides of Wadi Qelt. Excavations conducted over a period of 15 years

beginning in 1973, revealed a series of royal palaces from the Second Temple period, built successively one on top of the other, or adjacent to earlier structures. The excavations uncovered the complex plans of the palaces, as well as evidence of the opulent life at court.

## The Hasmonean Palace

Herod's palace at Jericho was preceded by successive palaces built by the kings of the Hasmonean dynasty, from the end of the 2nd to the middle of the 1st century BCE. The Hasmonean palaces, on the northern bank of Wadi Qelt, consisted of an open courtyard surrounded by rooms, clearly reflecting Hellenistic architectural influence. Noteworthy are elegant rooms for entertaining (triclinia) with colonnaded façades and bathrooms with bathtubs. These were decorated with colored frescos in imitation of marble and in geometric patterns of Hellenistic style; they are among the earliest discovered in the Land of Israel. There were "twin swimming pools", and one of the palaces was built atop a 15 m.-high artificial mound, surrounded by a wall with a glacis, towers and a broad, ca. 7 m.-deep moat.

Towards the end of Hasmonean rule, the palace complex was renovated and a more sophisticated bathhouse was added. It had several rooms, some decorated with frescos, bathtubs and mikva'ot (pools for Jewish ritual bathing). The main room in the bathhouse was paved with mosaic, in red, black and white geometric patterns, one of the earliest mosaic floors so far uncovered. A building, believed to be a synagogue, was found several years ago in the northeastern part of the Hasmonean palace complex, but the connection to the Hasmonean palace remains unclear, because Herod's palace was built on top of it (see Archeological Sites in Israel, No. 3, page 4).

A political assassination, recorded by [Josephus Flavius](#) (Antiquities 16:50-51), occurred in Jericho's Hasmonean palace. Fearful that his kingdom would be taken from him by the Romans and given to a young priest of the Hasmonean dynasty, Herod ordered his servants to drown the boy in the swimming pool of the palace in Jericho.

## Herod's Palaces

Well acquainted with the advantages of the Jericho oasis, Herod also built a palace there. It was much larger and more magnificent than that of his Hasmonean predecessors. Built in three stages, it covered extensive areas

on both sides of Wadi Qelt, with a bridge connecting the two parts. During this time, Roman imperial style in architecture was first applied in the Land of Israel and parts of the palace complex were obviously built by Roman artisans, working alongside local architects and builders.

## The First Palace

Herod's First Palace was situated on the southern bank of Wadi Qelt, in the region which Herod leased from Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, who had received it as a gift from Marcus Antonius in 36 BCE. The Hasmonean palace north of the wadi remained in use during this period. This First Palace was rectangular (87 x 46 m.), with distinctly Roman architectural features. It was fortified and had a single entrance. At its center was a large peristyle courtyard surrounded by rooms on three sides; to the west of the courtyard was a large guest hall with rows of columns along three sides, open to the courtyard on the fourth. An elaborate bathhouse in Roman style, with six rooms, was one of the innovations introduced by Herod. At the center was the caldarium (hot room), heated by a hypocaust (the floor raised on rows of ceramic supports, creating a space under the floor through which hot air was forced, heating the floor and thus, the entire room). The floors of the bathing rooms were paved with mosaics in colored, geometric patterns.

## The Second Palace

Herod's Second Palace was built north of Wadi Qelt, east of the Hasmonean Palace and on parts of it, after the destruction of the first palace by earthquake in 31 BCE. The twin swimming pools of the Hasmonean palace were joined into a single large one (32 x 18 m.) and surrounded by gardens. Trees and shrubs were planted in clay pots set into the ground; many of them were found in their original position. The palace had an unobstructed view of the surrounding scenery; it was divided into two wings, the northern built on a terrace 5 m. higher than the southern, connected by a broad staircase.

At the center of the northern wing was a courtyard (34 x 28 m.), surrounded by a row of columns on all four sides. Atypically, the center of the courtyard was raised above the level of the surrounding porticos; the purpose of this architectural innovation eludes us. Located at the center of a row of rooms south of the courtyard was a grand triclinium, decorated with frescos. East and north of the courtyard were rows of rooms, probably guest rooms.

The southern wing of the palace included installations for the use and pleasure of the court and its guests: a pool surrounded by a row of columns and a courtyard; a large hall opening towards the pool via a row of column on its façade; and a splendid bathhouse, its rooms paved with mosaics, its walls decorated with frescos. The hypocaust in the caldarium was built in an unusual way - its upper floor was supported by rows of small stone columns - instead of the usual fired bricks.

## The Third Palace

Herod's Third Palace, the largest, was constructed on both sides of Wadi Qelt and covered an area of over seven acres, with a bridge over the wadi, connecting its two wings. Some of the walls of this palace were made of a core of concrete, with stone facings termed opus reticulatum (small rectangular or square stones set into the concrete). Since this construction technique, though widely used in Rome, was extremely rare elsewhere, it is the opinion of the excavator, that King Herod had hired a team of Roman artisans.

The Northern Wing of the palace included halls, rooms, peristyle courtyards and a large bathhouse. The main entrance was in the south, opposite the bridge; its walls were decorated with frescos and its ceiling with stucco. At the center of the building was a courtyard surrounded by columns on three sides. The wider columns of the eastern colonnade were constructed of small stones and mortar and bore Corinthian capitals; the lower parts of the columns were plastered and painted red and black, while the upper portions were faced with grooved plaster.

North of the courtyard was the main bathhouse of the Third Palace. Entirely constructed of Roman concrete with stone facings in the opus reticulatum technique, it consisted of five rooms arranged in a row, with vaulted roofs. The main room served as an entrance hall where bathers undressed and relaxed. To the right one could walk to the caldarium (hot room), which was heated by hypocaust. This room was rectangular, its walls thicker than usual and in each of them was a niche. On the left side of the caldarium was a circular, domed room (8 m. in diameter), probably a sudatorium (sweat room), heated by charcoal braziers. From the main room of the bathhouse, one could walk to a stepped pool, the frigidarium (cold room).

West of the bathhouse was a courtyard surrounded on three sides by columns with ionic capitals. The walls of the courtyard were decorated

with frescos, among the most lavish found in Herod's palaces. At the center of the courtyard was a garden, in which seven rows of 12 clay flowerpots were found. At the northern side of the courtyard, which had no columns, was a semi-circular plaza with walls built of Roman concrete. An entrance in the center of the rounded wall led to a rectangular, splendidly decorated room. Its walls were covered with frescos, its ceiling with stucco and the floor was of plaster, grooved to simulate tiles. This was probably the throne room, where the king received his visitors.

The largest of the halls of the palace was located on its western side. It measured 29 x 19 m., and was undoubtedly used for large receptions; rows of columns surrounded it on three sides, the columns in the northern corner in the shape of a heart. The floor paving was of local and imported stone tiles, laid in opus sectile fashion (alternating colors and shapes placed so as to create geometric designs). The walls of the hall were covered with frescos and stucco.

The southern wing of the palace included the "sunken garden," a large pool and the southern artificial mound. The "sunken garden" was a garden located within a rectangular structure measuring 145 x 40 m. The back wall of the structure, with a series of niches, was built into the hillside. At the center of the wall was a large, circular, stepped niche; it is assumed that a variety of plants were grown in the many flowerpots found there.

An artificial mound with a staircase ascending to its top was found south of the sunken garden. The mound was created by building a large 20.5 x 19.5 m. frame of high walls in a grid, creating nine hollow spaces, which were then filled with earth and stones. Earth was heaped outside the frame, to create an artificial hill with a steep slope. This formed a stable platform for the superstructure, which consisted of a single, circular reception hall, 15 m. in diameter. The walls, with semi-circular niches, were decorated with colored frescos. This hall, which was raised above its surroundings, afforded a wonderful view of the Jericho oasis.

In the 1st century CE, until its destruction during the Jewish Rebellion against Rome (66 -70), the palace remained in use by members of King Herod's family.

The palace complex of Jericho was excavated by E. Netzer on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem,

and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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## Katzrin

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The ruins of the ancient Jewish village of Katzrin are located in the central [Golan](#), some 13 km. northeast of the [Sea of Galilee](#). The village was built on a gentle slope surrounded by fertile fields. A number of perennial springs in the wadi (dry riverbed) north of the village provided some water, but the main source was the spring located in the village, from which water was channeled to a small collecting pool cut into the basalt bedrock. Over the hundreds of years of the village's existence the level of its streets rose, and retaining walls had to be constructed around the spring, to allow continued drawing of water.

The location of Katzrin, mentioned in ancient Jewish sources, was identified at the end of the 19th century. The synagogue was discovered in 1967 during a survey, in which an ancient gravestone bearing the Hebrew inscription Rabbi Abun, may he rest in honor was also found. The synagogue was excavated between 1971 and 1984 and, beginning in 1983, houses in the village east of the synagogue were also excavated.

Minor Iron Age remains were found, on which a settlement was built in the [Hellenistic period](#) (2nd century BCE). During the [Roman-Byzantine period](#) (4th-7th centuries), the village grew and became prosperous. Thereafter it gradually declined; it was entirely abandoned during the [Mamluk period](#) (13-14th century).

The remains of ancient Katzrin have been restored after excavation: the columns of the [synagogue](#) are upright once more and the houses near the synagogue are two stories high and roofed. Samples of ancient household utensils and agricultural implements are displayed in the houses.

## The Village

Remains of the village of Katzrin were exposed east of the synagogue. The buildings have particularly thick walls of trimmed basalt stones and the entrances are made of long, very carefully dressed stones. The buildings of this ancient village were well adapted to the climate of the region: they maintained a comfortable temperature both in the cold winters and in the hot summers. Also, the extensive use of stone was an architectural solution to the absence of suitable wood in the Golan.

The excavations enable us to trace the architectural development of the village from the [Roman period](#) (3rd-4th centuries) to the Early Arab period (8th century). At first the basic dwelling unit consisted of one large room, which opened onto the street with a second story on top of it. Behind the house was a large yard, sometimes with an additional room that served as a storeroom or kitchen.

Over the years, additional units were added to this basic family unit. Thus a dense cluster of dwellings, devoid of planning, came into being. Each insula (cluster of buildings surrounded by streets) consisted of several dwelling units and a large number of rooms and yards arranged around a central courtyard. Narrow, winding lanes separated the buildings from the synagogue.

Ceramic storage jars and cooking pots, and crushing and grinding tools made of local basalt were found inside the houses. Surprising was the discovery of many hoards of hundreds of coins each, hidden under the floors and thresholds and in the walls of the houses. One such hoard contained 9,000 coins dating from the 4th century. High inflation in this period had caused considerable devaluation of the coins; it has been suggested, therefore, that the money was not hoarded for future use, but concealed to bring good fortune, a widespread belief among villagers at the time.

## The Synagogue

A synagogue was first built in the 4th-5th centuries - a modest, square building with six columns. In the 6th century, a large and elegant synagogue was built on its ruins; during the years of its use, it was renovated several times, and additions were built. Constructed entirely of basalt, it is notable for the wealth of its decorations. The synagogue was partially preserved to a height of 3 m.

Oriented north-south towards Jerusalem, the synagogue is trapezoidal in shape (about 17.6 x 15.3 m.) with minor differences in the length of the walls. The exterior walls were carefully built of square, well-trimmed stones, while the interior walls were of inferior construction. The main entrance, in the center of the northern wall, has a doorway decorated with carved stepped-profile and egg-and-dart designs. On the lintel is a carved wreath tied in a Hercules knot, flanked by two pomegranates and two amphorae. A secondary entrance in the western wall had a lintel with carved rhomboids and triangles and a rosette in the center.

Two rows of four columns each divided the synagogue into a nave and two aisles. The capitals of the columns are Ionic in inspiration, but contain the variant details characteristic of Golan synagogue architecture. The synagogue was two stories high (apparently without an inner balcony on the second floor), and had rows of windows at the top of the walls. The roof consisted of wooden beams covered by ceramic tiles; many fragments of these were found in the ruins. In the southern wall, which is oriented towards Jerusalem, a pair of ashlar-built steps led to a raised, solid stone platform (bama). It is assumed that the wooden structure of the Torah ark stood on it. Beneath this bama was an elongated stone-paved chamber, narrow and low, which probably served as a geniza (storage space for sacred texts no longer in use). The walls of the prayer hall were plastered and painted white, and some of the lower portions decorated with red geometric motifs. Stone benches were built along the walls, in the form of a double step.

In the 6th century, the synagogue was paved with colored mosaics, of which only small portions have been preserved. The mosaic flooring was covered with hard, white plaster during repairs carried out in the 7th century.

The Katzrin synagogue was in use even after the [Muslim conquest](#); it was apparently destroyed during the earthquake in 749, which also destroyed most of the village. A small mosque was built in the northern part of the synagogue in the Mamluk period, but it was in use for only a short time. The village was then abandoned and covered by debris until its discovery.

The synagogue was excavated by D. Urman, M. Ben-Ari and S. Barlev, and later by Z. Maoz, R. Hachlili and A. Killebrew, while the village was excavated by A. Killebrew. The excavations were carried out on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Kiryat Sefer

by Hillel Geva

Kiryat Sefer is located some 25 km. east of [Tel Aviv](#), on a hill near the ancient road from [Caesarea](#) via Beit Horon to [Jerusalem](#).

The remains of a small Jewish village were found at the site. Several dwellings were arranged around a broad square, at the center of which stood a public building - the [synagogue](#). The buildings were well constructed and separated by narrow alleys; their walls made of large, trimmed stones, and the entrances of well-dressed ashlar.

Each dwelling consisted of several rooms around an inner courtyard. In them were various installations, such as pits for storing water, cut into the rock to considerable depth, olive presses with stone basins for crushing and heavy stone weights for pressing. The mikva'ot (Jewish ritual baths) in the houses were cut into the rock and plastered, with stairs leading to the bottom. Their presence attests to the resident's attention to Jewish ritual purity regulations. One structure, with several particularly large rooms, probably served as a warehouse for the products of the inhabitants.

### The Synagogue

A small building with a unique plan stood in the village square. It was a square structure (9.6 m. wide on each side), the façade with the main entrance facing north. This wall was particularly well built of large ashlar with margins and smoothed boss, unlike the other walls, which were constructed of large, trimmed stones like the village houses. The entrance

in the center of the façade had a lintel with a rosette in relief, within a triangular frame.

The floor of the [synagogue](#) was carefully laid of large, trimmed stones. Around three of the building's inner walls (all except the entrance wall) were high, wide benches constructed of stone. Four pillars made of stone sections and topped with Dorian-style capitals stood in the center. At each side of the entrance, and in the back wall of the building, protruded two pairs of square stone pilasters with capitals. The columns and the pilasters created two rows along the length of the building that supported arches, originally surmounted by a wooden structure that in turn supported the roofing. Fragments of red-painted plaster are evidence that the walls were painted. In the western wall of the building was an entrance to a small, plastered room in which ritual objects of the synagogue were probably kept.

## Summary

The presence of synagogues in the [Second Temple](#) period is known from Jewish sources, as well as from the [New Testament](#). The remains of a few such synagogues have been uncovered, including the well-known one in the fortress of [Masada](#) on the [Dead Sea](#) and the one of [Gamala](#), on the [Golan](#). During this period, the Temple still stood in Jerusalem and served as the center of Jewish cult. Synagogues existed in Jewish settlements, serving the needs of the community as places for [Torah](#) study and [prayer](#). Their existence did not compete with, or challenge, the centrality and importance of the Temple. The synagogue discovered at Kiryat Sefer demonstrates that synagogues were built even in small villages on the fringes of the area inhabited by Jews. The synagogue of Kiryat Sefer was a modest structure, built according to the economic means and the requirements of the village community.

The building has architectural features similar to those of other synagogues of this period, thereby aiding researchers in identifying it as a synagogue. The fact that it is not oriented towards Jerusalem only demonstrates that during this period regulations governing synagogue orientation (prayer facing Jerusalem) had not yet been consolidated. Finds from the houses of the village, such as pottery and coins, show that the village had been founded in the Hellenistic period (3rd-2nd centuries BCE), but the buildings in the village and the synagogue date from the 1st century BCE.



The village was established by Jews who had left the hills of Benjamin and Ephraim (the Samaria region). They developed vineyards and olive groves, sold their products on local markets, and even exported abroad. Export of olive oil and wine brought them economic prosperity, as reflected in several hoards of coins, including many gold coins, which were found in the ruins of the village. Though few in number, the inhabitants were able to construct spacious houses and to fund the building of a synagogue, in which to gather for religious and social functions.

The village of Kiryat Sefer was abandoned during the suppression of the [First Jewish Revolt](#) against Rome (66-70 CE). It was briefly resettled, but was destroyed during the Roman suppression of the [Bar-Kokhba Rebellion](#) (132-135 CE).

The remains of the village and the synagogue have been preserved within the area of the modern settlement of Kiryat Sefer. After reconstruction, the site will be opened to the public.

The site was excavated during the late 1990s by Y. Magen on behalf of the Staff Officer for Archeology in Judea and Samaria.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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### Kursi: Christian Monastery on the Shore of the Sea of Galilee

The Byzantine monastery of Kursi is situated east of the Sea of Galilee at the mouth of a *wadi* (riverbed) descending from the Golan Heights and creating a small, fertile valley along the shoreline. The remains of the ancient monastery came to light accidentally, during construction of a new road, and they were excavated in the years 1971-1974. The site is now open to the public as a national park.

The location of Kursi, its architectural features and the testimony of early travelers identify it as the site where, according to tradition, Jesus healed two men possessed by demons. (Matthew 8: 28-33) To commemorate the miracle, a monastery was built there, probably at the beginning of the 6th century.

The monastery is surrounded by a protective stone wall which creates a rectangular enclave measuring 140 x 120 m. The entrance, protected by a watchtower, faces west, towards the Sea of Galilee. In antiquity, a paved road led from the monastery to a small harbor which served Christian pilgrims arriving in boats.

A wide, paved path led from the entrance of the monastery complex to a large plaza in front of the church at the center of the complex. The 45 x 25 m. rectangular church consists of a courtyard surrounded by pillars; these formed an *atrium* through which one entered the prayer hall itself. In its interior, two rows of eight stone columns supported Corinthian capitals of marble with crosses carved in relief. The columns divided the prayer hall into a nave and two side aisles. The whole floor of the church was paved with colored *tesserae*. Preserved mainly in the aisles, square frames are decorated with floral and faunal motifs, such as grapes, figs,

pomegranates, fish, birds and water fowl. The faunal representations were almost obliterated, probably by members of the iconoclastic movement which became active in the early Arab period (7th century). At the eastern end of the church was a raised apse reached by two steps with two square rooms beside it. One was used as a baptistery, attested to by a Greek inscription, dedicating it to the Abbot Stephanos in the time of the Emperor Mauricius (end of the 6th century).

Lateral wings were added to the sides of the church; the northern wing was an oil press, probably providing sacred oil for the pilgrims. To the south of the church there was a chapel with mosaic paving, beneath which was a crypt which contained the tombs of monks who had served in the monastery. Within the grounds of the monastery, living quarters for the monks and a hostel for housing pilgrims, as well as household utilities, were uncovered.

Upon the slope overlooking the monastery to the south were the remains of a small chapel, incorporating a cave with a mosaic floor. In front of it stood a rock, some seven meters high, surrounded by revetment walls to prevent its collapse. This presumably marks the place where, according to tradition, the miracle recounted in the New Testament occurred.

The monastery was damaged by an earthquake in the middle of the 8th century and abandoned.

The site was excavated by D. Urman and V. Tzaferis on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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### Lachish: Royal City of the Kingdom of Judah

Tel Lachish, the mound of the ancient city of Lachish, is located in the lowlands of the Judean Hills, some 40 km. southeast of [Jerusalem](#). The abundance of water sources and the fertile valleys of the area favored the existence of a prosperous city over a considerable period of time.

The mound of the city was first excavated during the 1930s. Systematic and in-depth excavations of large areas of the mound were again conducted between 1973 and 1987.

#### The Canaanite City

A large, fortified Canaanite city was established at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE on a hillock dominating the surrounding area. It was fortified by a wall and a *glacis*, a ramp-like structure of compressed earth with a hard, smooth surface of lime plaster. The fortification was completed by a *fosse* (moat) at the foot of the *glacis*.

A large palace of numerous rooms and a courtyard, probably the residence of the Canaanite King of Lachish, stood on the acropolis - the highest part of the city. It could not be completely exposed, as a later Israelite palace was built above it.

From letters sent by the kings of Lachish to their overlords, the pharaohs of Egypt (the 14th century BCE el-Amarna correspondence) it may be deduced that Lachish was an important urban center and the seat of the Egyptian governor of southern Canaan.

Two temples are known from this period at Lachish. Finds from the Fosse Temple, at the western foot of the mound, include cult vessels, offering

bowls and imported items of pottery, faience and ivory, all evidence of wealth. The temple on the acropolis, with Egyptian architectural elements, included an entrance chamber, a main hall (16 x 13 m.) and a raised holy of holies. Two octagonal stone columns supported the wooden ceiling, while the walls were decorated with painted plaster.

Canaanite Lachish was totally destroyed by fire at the end of the 12th century BCE. According to one theory, the destruction was wrought by the Philistines of the nearby Coastal Plain; according to another, more widely accepted theory, it was wrought by the Israelites, whose capture and destruction of the city is recorded in the Bible. (Joshua 10:31,32)

## The Israelite City

Rebuilt as a fortress-city of the Kingdom of Judah, Lachish gained in importance after the split of the kingdom into Judah and Israel. As the largest city on the western border of the Kingdom of Judah facing the Philistines of the Coastal Plain, Lachish was fortified with a double line of massive mud-brick walls on stone foundations. The main city wall on top of the mound was 6 m. wide, with a sloping *glacis* supported by a revetment wall along the middle of the slope. The city gate, in the southwestern wall, is one of the largest and most strongly fortified gates known of this period. It consists of an outer gate in a huge tower built of large stones which protrudes from the line of defenses. The gatehouse, on top of the mound, consists of three pairs of chambers with wooden doors on hinges.

A palace-fortress was built on the acropolis and probably served as the residence of the governor appointed by the King of Judah. During the 8th century BCE a new wing was added to the palace, enlarging it to 76 x 36 m. Next to the palace was a courtyard with stables and storerooms; the whole complex was surrounded by a wall with a gatehouse.

The city of Lachish was destroyed by the Assyrian army during Sennacherib's campaign against the Kingdom of Judah in 701 BCE. The destruction was total; the buildings were burned to the ground and the inhabitants exiled. The Assyrian campaign, during the reign of King Hezekiah, and the encampment of the Assyrian army at Lachish are described in detail in the Bible. (2 Kings 18:14-17; 2 Chronicles 32:9) The conquest of Lachish is depicted in monumental stone reliefs found at Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, providing a rare contemporary "photograph" of the battle and conquest. These relief-images of the

Assyrian attack have been confirmed by archeological evidence at the site: the attack on Lachish was launched from the southwest; the attackers built a siege ramp against the slope of the mound, which according to calculation contained some 15,000 tons of stones and earth! The ramp was covered with plaster to allow the Assyrian battering ram to be moved up to the city wall and breach it. The city's defenders constructed a counter-ramp inside the city, thus raising the city wall, which forced the Assyrians to raise the height of their ramp in order to overcome the city's new defenses. The fierceness of the battle is attested to by the remains of weapons, scales of armor, hundreds of slingstones and arrowheads.

During the reign of King Josiah (639-609 BCE), the city of Lachish was rebuilt and fortified. This much poorer city was captured and destroyed by the Babylonian army in 587/6 BCE. (Jeremiah 34:7) In one of the rooms, which opened onto a courtyard outside the city gatehouse, a group of *ostraca* were found during the excavations in the 1930s. Now known as the Lachish Letters, they constitute an important corpus of Hebrew documents from the First Temple period. Written in paleo-Hebrew script on pottery sherds, they are messages sent by the garrison commander of a small fortress to his commanding officer in Lachish.

The excavations were conducted by D. Ussishkin of Tel Aviv University.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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### Masada: Desert Fortress Overlooking the Dead Sea



[Masada](#) (Hebrew for fortress), is situated atop an isolated rock cliff at the western end of the Judean Desert, overlooking the Dead Sea. It is a place of gaunt and majestic beauty.

On the east the rock falls in a sheer drop of about 450 meters to the Dead Sea (the lowest point on earth, some 400 m. below sea level) and in the west it stands about 100 meters 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*. Born Joseph ben Matityahu of a priestly family, he was a young leader at the outbreak of the [Great Jewish Rebellion](#) against [Rome](#) (66 CE) when he was appointed governor of Galilee. He managed to survive the suicide pact of the last defenders of Jodfat and

surrendered to Vespasian (who shortly thereafter was proclaimed emperor) – events he described in detail. Calling himself Josephus Flavius, he became a Roman citizen and a successful historian. Moral judgment aside, his accounts have been proved largely accurate.

According to Josephus Flavius, Herod the Great built the fortress of [Masada](#) between 37 and 31 BCE. Herod, an Idumean, had been made King of Judea by his Roman overlords and was hated by his Jewish subjects. Herod, the master builder, “furnished this fortress as a refuge for himself.” It included a casemate wall around the plateau, storehouses, large cisterns ingeniously filled with rainwater, barracks, palaces and an armory.

Some 75 years after Herod’s death, at the beginning of the Revolt of the Jews against the Romans in 66 CE, a group of Jewish rebels overcame the Roman garrison of [Masada](#). After the fall of [Jerusalem](#) and the destruction of the [Temple](#) (70 CE) they were joined by zealots and their families who had fled from [Jerusalem](#). With [Masada](#) as their base, they raided and harassed the Romans for two years. Then, in 73 CE, the Roman governor Flavius Silva marched against [Masada](#) with the Tenth Legion, auxiliary units and thousands of Jewish prisoners-of-war. The Romans established camps at the base of [Masada](#), laid siege to it and built a circumvallation wall. They then constructed a rampart of thousands of tons of stones and beaten earth against the western approaches of the fortress and, in the spring of the year 74 CE, moved a battering ram up the ramp and breached the wall of the fortress.

Josephus Flavius dramatically recounts the story told him by two surviving women. The defenders – almost one thousand men, women and children – led by Eleazar ben Ya’ir, decided to burn the fortress and end their own lives, rather than be taken alive. “And so met (the Romans) with the multitude of the slain, but could take no pleasure in the fact, though it were done to their enemies. Nor could they do other than wonder at the courage of their resolution, and at the immovable contempt of death which so great a number of them had shown, when they went through with such an action as that was.”

The Zealots cast lots to choose 10 men to kill the remainder. They then chose among themselves the one man who would kill the survivors. That last Jew then killed himself.

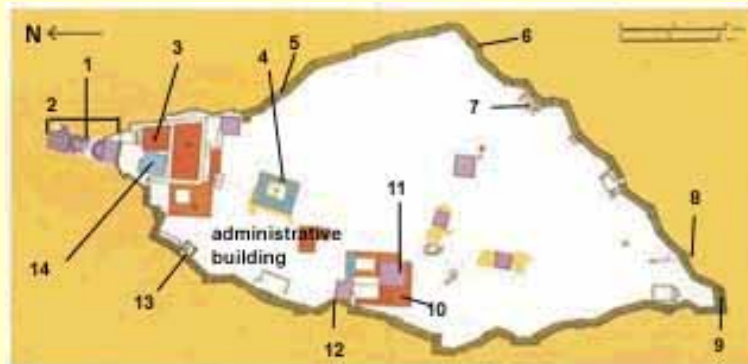
The heroic story of [Masada](#) and its dramatic end attracted many explorers to the Judean desert in attempts to locate the remains of the fortress. The site was identified in 1842, but intensive excavations took place only in 1963-65, with the help of hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers from Israel and from many foreign countries, eager to participate in this exciting archeological venture. To them and to Israelis, Masada symbolizes the determination of the Jewish people to be free in its own land.

## THE HERODIAN FORTRESS

The rhomboid, flat plateau of [Masada](#) measures 600 x 300 m. The casemate wall (two parallel walls with partitions dividing the space between them into rooms), is 1400 m. long and 4 m. wide. It was built along the edge of the plateau, above the steep cliffs, and it had many towers. Three narrow, winding paths led from below to fortified gates. The

water supply was guaranteed by a network of large, rock-hewn cisterns on the northwestern side of the hill. They filled during the winter with rainwater flowing in streams from the mountain on this side. Cisterns on the summit supplied the immediate needs of the residents of [Masada](#) and could be relied upon in time of siege.

To maintain interior coolness in the hot and dry climate of [Masada](#), the many buildings of various sizes and functions had thick walls constructed of layers of hard dolomite stone, covered with plaster. The higher northern side of [Masada](#) was densely built up with structures serving as the administrative center of the fortress and included storehouses, a large bathhouse and comfortable living quarters for officials and their families.



- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Small bathhouse          | 8. Underground cistern |
| 2. Herod's palace-villa     | 9. Southern bastion    |
| 3. Storerooms               | 10. western palace     |
| 4. Apartment building       | 11. Throne room        |
| 5. Snake-path gate          | 12. West gate          |
| 6. Casemate-wall            | 13. Synagogue          |
| 7. Zealots' living quarters | 14. Large bathhouse    |

**King Herod's residential palace.** On the northern edge of the steep cliff, with a splendid view, stood the elegant, intimate, private palace-villa of the king. It was separated from the fortress by a wall, affording total privacy and security. This northern palace consists of three terraces, luxuriously built, with a narrow, rock-cut staircase connecting them. On the upper terrace, several rooms served as living quarters; in front of them is a semi-circular balcony with two concentric rows of columns. The rooms were paved with black and white mosaics in geometric patterns.

The two lower terraces were intended for entertainment and relaxation. The middle terrace had two concentric walls with columns, covered by a roof; this created a portico around a central courtyard. The lowest, square terrace has an open central courtyard, surrounded by porticos. Its columns were covered with fluted plaster and supported Corinthian capitals. The lower parts of the walls were covered in frescos of multicolored geometrical patterns or painted in imitation of cut marble. On this terrace was also a small private bathhouse. Here, under a thick layer of debris, were found the remains of three skeletons, of a man, a woman and a child. The beautifully braided hair of the woman was preserved, and her sandals were found intact next to her; also hundreds of

small, bronze scales of the man's armor, probably booty taken from the Romans.

**The storehouse complex.** This consisted of two rows of long halls opening onto a central corridor. The floor of the storerooms was covered with thick plaster and the roofing consisted of wooden beams covered with hard plaster. Here, large numbers of broken storage jars which once contained large quantities of oil, wine, grains and other foodstuffs were found.

**The large bathhouse.** Elaborately built, it probably served the guests and senior officials of [Masada](#). It consisted of a large courtyard surrounded by porticos and several rooms, all with mosaic or tiled floors and some with frescoed walls. The largest of the rooms was the hot room (*caldarium*). Its suspended floor was supported by rows of low pillars, making it possible to blow hot air from the furnace outside, under the floor and through clay pipes along the walls, to heat the room to the desired temperature.

**The western palace.** This is the largest building on [Masada](#), covering over 4,000 square meters (one acre). Located along the center of the western casemate wall, near the main gate towards Judea and Jerusalem, it served as the main administration center of the fortress, as well as the king's ceremonial palace. It consists of four wings: an elaborate royal apartment, a service and workshop section, storerooms and an administrative unit. In the royal apartment, many rooms were built around a central courtyard. On its southern side was a large room with two Ionic columns supporting the roof over the wide opening into the courtyard. Its walls were decorated with molded panels of white stucco. On the eastern side were several rooms with splendid colored mosaic floors. One of these, the largest room, has a particularly decorative mosaic floor with floral and geometric patterns within several concentric square bands. This room may have been King Herod's throne room, the seat of authority when he was in residence at [Masada](#).

## MASADA, STRONGHOLD OF THE ZEALOTS

**The synagogue,** part of the Herodian construction, was a hall measuring 12.5 x 10.5 m., incorporated into the northwestern section of the casemate wall and oriented towards Jerusalem. This synagogue also served the Jews who lived in [Masada](#) during the Revolt. They built four tiers of plastered benches along the walls, as well as columns to support its ceiling. This synagogue is considered to be the best example of the early synagogues, those predating the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

An ostrakon bearing the inscription *me'aser kohen* (tithe for the priest) was found in the synagogue. Also, fragments of two scrolls, parts of Deuteronomy and Ezekiel 37 (including the vision of the "dry bones"), were found hidden in pits dug under the floor of a small room built inside the synagogue.

**Artifacts.** Among the many small finds – most from the occupation period of the zealots – were pottery and stone vessels, weapons (mainly arrowheads), remnants of textiles and of foodstuffs preserved in the dry climate of this area; also hundreds of pottery sherds, some with Hebrew lettering, coins and *shekels*.



Of special interest among the postherds of amphora used for the importation of wine from Rome (inscribed with the name C. Sentius Saturninus, consul for the year 19 BCE), is one bearing the inscription: *To Herod King of the Jews*

Several hoards of bronze coins and dozens of silver *shekels* and half-*shekels* had been hidden by the zealots; the *shekalim* were found in superb condition and represent all the years of the Revolt, from year one to the very rare year 5 (70 CE), when the Temple was destroyed.

In the area in front of the northern palace, eleven small ostraca were uncovered, each bearing a single name. One reads "ben Yai'r" and could be short for Eleazar ben Ya'ir, the commander of the fortress. It has been suggested that the other ten names are those of the men chosen by lot to kill the others and then themselves, as recounted by Josephus.

Evidence of a great conflagration were found everywhere. The fire was pobably set by the last of the zealots before they committed suicide. Josephus Flavius writes that everything was burnt except the stores – to let the Romans know that it was not hunger that led the defenders to suicide.

Two thousand years have passed since the fall of [Masada](#). The climate of the region and its remoteness have helped to preserve its remains to an extraordinary degree. Today, a modern cable car carries the many visitors to the top of the rock with its breathtaking view across the Dead Sea, where the last Jewish stronghold against Rome stood.

The excavations were directed by Y. Yadin on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Exploration Society and the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (today, the Israel Antiquities Authority)

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## Megiddo - The Solomonic Chariot City

Tel (mound) [Megiddo](#), known as Tel-el-Mutesellim (Hill of the Ruler) has been identified as one of the most important cities of biblical times. Located on a hill overlooking the fertile [Jezreel Valley](#), Megiddo was of great strategic importance, as it commanded the eastern approaches of Nahal Iron (nahal, a dry river bed), part of the international highway which led from [Egypt](#), along the coastal plain to the [Jezreel Valley](#), and thence to Damascus and Mesopotamia (the highway became known later as Via Maris, Way of the Sea). Numerous battles fought for control of the city are recorded in ancient sources; in the [New Testament](#) ([Revelations 16:16](#)), Armageddon (believed by some to be a corruption of Har Megiddo - the hill of Megiddo) is named as the site of the "Battle of the End of Days".

One of the largest city mounds in Israel (covering an area of about 15 acres) and rich in archeological finds, Tel Megiddo is an important site for the study of the material culture of biblical times. A total of 20 cities were built at Megiddo, one above the other, over the course of 5,000 years of continuous occupation; from the time of the first settlement at the end of the 6th millennium BCE to its abandonment in the 5th century BCE.

Several expeditions have excavated at Megiddo since the beginning of the 20th century. The most important excavations were conducted by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago between the years 1925 and 1939. All four of the uppermost cities of the tel, dating to the first half of the 1st millennium BCE, were excavated by this expedition. Several sections excavated to bedrock exposed the remains of the earliest city.

The finds corroborate written evidence concerning the importance of Megiddo, first as a royal Canaanite city, then as an Egyptian stronghold



and administrative center, later as a "chariot city" of the kings of Israel, and finally as the controlling city of Assyrian and Persian provinces.

Excavations at Megiddo were renewed in 1994, with the aim of clarifying the tel's stratigraphy and chronology and of obtaining further information about architectural and cultural remains at the site.

## **A Royal Canaanite City and an Egyptian Administrative Center**

A village had been established on the hill of Megiddo at the end of the 6th millennium BCE, but the first fortified urban settlement, remains of which were uncovered on bedrock in the eastern part of the tel, dates from the beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE. Within its walls was an elongated rectangular temple, with an altar opposite its entrance; it had a low ceiling, supported by wooden columns placed on stone bases. The renewed excavations have exposed several long, parallel stone walls, each 4 m. thick, the lanes between them filled with the bones of sacrificed animals.

Over the next 2000 years, a series of Canaanite temples were built, one on top of the other, on the site of this ancient temple.

At the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, a circular bama (altar) of fieldstones, 8.5 m. in diameter and 1.5 m high, was built. Seven steps led to its top, upon which sacrifices were offered. This is an excellent example of the cultic bamot (altars) frequently mentioned in the Bible. (e.g., I Samuel 9:12-15) Then, at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, a complex of three identical temples was added at the back of the bama, forming an impressive Canaanite cultic precinct. Each of these megaron-type temples consisted of a rectangular room with a bama at its back and an open courtyard at its façade, where a pair of round stone bases indicate pillars. Towards the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, a new Canaanite temple was built on the ruins of its predecessors; it had especially thick walls and included a small cultic chamber with two towers protecting its façade.

From the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, Megiddo was an important military center. The city was surrounded by mighty stone fortifications, strengthened by earthen ramparts with glacis (a sloped hard and smooth coating). The area within the walls was carefully planned and divided into several clearly defined quarters: the royal quarters containing the palaces; the administrative quarter; and the residential quarters. This

plan did not significantly change until the 12th century BCE.

Toward the middle of the 2nd millennium, a new gate of unusually large dimensions, built of large ashlar on trimmed basalt foundations, was built in the city's northern wall. It included two pairs of chambers with a broad passage between them, providing convenient access to chariots. Next to the gate in the eastern wall stood the palace of the Canaanite kings of Megiddo. This was a very large and splendid palace, its rooms built around a courtyard. Gold jewelry and ivories found in the palace treasury provide evidence of the wealth of the kings of Megiddo and their political and commercial links with neighboring lands and cultures.

Megiddo is mentioned many times in Egyptian royal inscriptions from the 15th to the 13th centuries BCE. They attest to the city's importance as the center of Egyptian administration in Canaan and as a logistical base on the road north. Inscriptions in the temple of the god Amon at Karnak (in Upper Egypt) describe the first military campaign of Thutmose III in Canaan, at the beginning of the 15th century BCE. According to this description, the Egyptian army crossed the hills of Manasseh and then advanced via Nahal Iron to the Jezreel Valley. The united army of the Canaanite kings, surprised by this military move, was soundly defeated; Megiddo was conquered after a seven-month siege.

*His majesty [Thutmose III] speaks to his generals:*

*That wretched enemy [the Canaanites]... has come and has entered into Megiddo. He is there at this moment. He has gathered to him the princes of every foreign country that had been loyal to Egypt, as well as those as far as Naharin and Mitanni [in today's Syria]...*

*Then his majesty issued forth at the head of his army... He had not met a single enemy. Their southern wing was in Ta'anach, while their northern wing was on the south side of the Qina Valley... Thereupon his majesty [Thutmose] prevailed over them [the Canaanites] at the head of his army. Then they saw his majesty prevailing over them, and they fled headlong to Megiddo with faces of fear. They abandoned their horses and their chariots of gold and silver...*

Six letters found in the archives of the Egyptian kings at el-Amarna, dating

to the 14th century BCE, were sent by the king of Megiddo to his overlords, the kings of Egypt. In these letters, Biridiya, king of Megiddo, describes the growing threat to his city at the hands of Labayu (king of Shechem) and pleads for help:

*To the king, my lord, and my Sun-god, say: Thus Biridiya, the faithful servant of the king. At the two feet of the king, my lord, and my Sun-god, seven and seven times I fall. Let the king know that ever since the archers returned [to Egypt], Labayu has carried on hostilities against me, and we are not able to pluck the wool, and we are not able to go outside the gate in the presence of Labayu, since he learned that thou hast not given archers; and now his face is set to take Megiddo, but let the king protect the city, lest Labayu seize it. Verily, there is no other purpose in Labayu. He seeks to destroy Megiddo.*

With the decline of Egyptian control in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE, struggles for power took place among the Canaanites, Philistines and Israelites which left their mark upon the remains at Megiddo. The city was finally conquered by King David, who established it as an important regional center of his kingdom.

## **The monarchic "Chariot City"**

Megiddo reached its peak under [King Solomon](#) in the 10th century BCE. He rebuilt it as a royal city, administering the northern part of the kingdom. The building of Jerusalem, the capital, and of Hatzor, Megiddo and Gezer, as part of centralized urban planning, is recounted in the Bible:

And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hatzor, and Megiddo, and Gezer. ([1 Kings 9:15](#))

Architectural features characteristic of the royal centers of the monarchic period have been found in all three cities. In the Megiddo excavations, such elements were encountered in the palaces, buildings, fortifications, administrative buildings, storehouses, stables and the water system.

During the reign of [Solomon](#), Megiddo was surrounded by a sturdy casemate wall (two parallel walls with partitions between them, creating rooms). The casemates served as barracks for soldiers and for storage of

equipment. A new city gate was constructed on the remains of the Canaanite gate in the northern part of wall. It included three sets of chambers with a passage between them; for additional security, towers and an outer gate were added outside this gate.

Within the city, large palaces were built, and next to them identically planned administrative buildings: a series of rooms around an open central courtyard. These were very well built, with extensive use of large ashlars, the thick walls supporting a second story. Atop the doorposts were Proto-Aeolic stone capitals, with stylized volutes.

Megiddo was destroyed in the military campaign of Pharaoh Shishak in 926 BCE, and restored during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel (ca. 874 - 852 BCE) who made it a royal "chariot city." The new city's walls were 3.5 m. thick, constructed with offsets and insets and incorporating the Solomonic city gate. Noteworthy among the structures from the period of Ahab are several large, identical buildings, covering large areas of the city. Some archeologists believe they were storehouses, barracks or market-places, but most researchers regard them as stables.

Based on the biblical account, the stables were first dated to the reign of [Solomon](#), but new evidence has established their date as early 9th century BCE, in the reign of King Ahab. The southern stable complex is divided into several compartments, each subdivided into three long, parallel halls: the outer halls for stalls, the corridors between them for use by the stable hands. The ceiling of the stables was supported by large, square stone pillars. Massive stone troughs stood in the stables, as well as perforated stones for tying the horses. In the middle of a large courtyard, surrounded by a stone wall, was a watering pool. It is estimated that Megiddo's stables could have accommodated 450 horses; the adjacent structures undoubtedly housed dozens of battle chariots - an impressive quantity in terms of the period.

To safeguard the city's water supply in times of siege, a subterranean water system was hewn in the rock in the western part of the city, which made it possible to reach the spring at the foot of the hill outside the walls without being seen by the enemy. This project required considerable engineering ingenuity and an enormous amount of hard labor. The water system consists of a square, 25 m.-deep vertical shaft and an 80 m.-long horizontal tunnel. In order to hide the source of water from the enemy and to protect the users of the water system, a particularly thick wall, camouflaged by a covering of earth, was constructed at the entrance to the cave from which

the spring emanates, blocking access from the outside.

Megiddo continued to serve as the seat of the royal governor during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. This is attested to by a seal, found in excavations at the beginning of the 20th century, bearing the inscription "to Shema, servant of Jeroboam." During the rebellion of Jehu, Ahaziah, king of Judah, fled to Megiddo and died there of his wounds. ([II Kings 9: 27](#))

Megiddo was apparently conquered and destroyed in 732 BCE, during the campaign of Tiglath Pileser III, king of Assyria, against the Kingdom of Israel. ([II Kings 15: 29](#))

## The Last Days of Megiddo

The [Assyrians](#) made Megiddo the royal city of their province in the north of the conquered kingdom of Israel and rebuilt it in their finest architectural tradition. An orthogonal grid of streets divided the city into quarters. In the south of the city, a round, subterranean stone-lined silo, 11 m. in diameter, with two narrow flights of stairs along its sides, was found. At the end of the 7th century, apparently during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, a rectangular fortress was constructed on top of the eastern side of the tel, but it remained in use only until Josiah's fall in 609 BCE, when it was destroyed.

In his days Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. ([II Kings 23: 29](#))

From then on, Megiddo fell into decline; it was finally abandoned during the [Persian rule](#), in the 5th century BCE.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## The Monastery of Martyrius

When the new town of Ma'ale Adumim was built in the Judean hills east of Jerusalem, (1982-85) the remains of the large Byzantine Monastery of Martyrius were uncovered on a hill in the center of the new town. The hill overlooks the road climbing from Jericho to Jerusalem, as it did in antiquity.

The Monastery of Martyrius was one of the many monasteries, housing hundreds of monks, which were founded in the Judean Desert during Byzantine times. According to a contemporary source, Martyrius was born in Cappadocia (in present-day Turkey) and arrived in the year 457 at the Monastery of Euthymius east of Jerusalem. He left that crowded monastery and lived as a hermit in a nearby cave. Later he served as a priest of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and as Patriarch of Jerusalem (478-486). During this period he probably built and supported the monastery bearing his name.

The compound of the Monastery of Martyrius is almost a square, with an area of 2.5 acres, completely surrounded by walls which have been preserved to a height of two meters.

The gate to the monastery was located in its eastern wall; sockets with iron bases (for wooden doors) have been preserved. A round rolling-stone, 2.5 m. in diameter, was found in place inside the gate, probably for additional protection. Numerous rock-cut cisterns and a network of canals, collecting and channeling rainwater into the cisterns, assured the water supply in this semi-arid area.

Built around a large central courtyard, the monastery complex included many rooms, a church, several chapels, a refectory, a kitchen, a



storeroom, a bathhouse, an enclosure with stalls and mangers for animals and, outside the wall, a hostel.

The main church, 25.5 x 6.6 m. in size, was paved in colorful mosaics in round and hexagonal frames with depictions of animals; unfortunately, very little has survived. A Greek inscription mentions the abbots Genesius and Iohannes, in whose memory the church was built.

On the northern side of the monastery complex, a cave, reached by several steps, contained a number of skeletons. A mosaic inscription in Greek mentions the names of three priests who were buried there. It is assumed that the monk Martyrius dwelt in this cave before being appointed to the church hierarchy in Jerusalem.

The large (31 x 25 m.) refectory (dining room), is surrounded by stone-built benches and divided by two rows of columns which supported the second story. The floor is covered with magnificent, colorful mosaics of geometrical designs, preserved intact. A Greek inscription reads: "During the time of our holy father Genesius, presbyter [church elder] and archimandrite [abbot], this work too was done for his salvation and for the salvation of his brethren in Christ. This work was completed in the month of March, in the first year of the indiction."

The kitchen (21 x 6 m.), next to the refectory, was also paved with mosaics and contained marble tables. Hundreds of ceramic vessels, metalware, grinding utensils, cooking pots and many pottery wine cups were found here. The bathhouse had a hot room, the floor of which rested on low brick columns, and a pool adjacent to it.

Outside the monastery complex, near the main gate, a hostel (43 x 20 m.) with a chapel, bedrooms and stables catered to the needs of the many pilgrims who came to visit. Such hostels are mentioned in contemporary sources as an important factor in the monasticism of the Byzantine period.

The monastery was damaged during the Persian invasion of 614 and was abandoned after the Arab conquest in the mid-7th century.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/monastery.html).

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### Nahal Refaiim: Caananite Bronze Age Villages near Jerusalem

The site is situated on the southern slopes of a hill - Giv'at Massua - near the bank of Nahal Refa'im (Heb., Refa'im Valley), some 6 km. southwest of the [Old City](#) of [Jerusalem](#), on the ancient road which led from the Coastal Plain to the Judean Hills and Jerusalem.

Excavations at the site in the Refa'im Valley have been conducted sporadically since 1980, but most of the remains were uncovered between 1987 and 1990, when the Biblical Zoo was established there. Two large villages, one on top of the other and from different periods of the Bronze Age, were excavated.

The name of the Bronze Age villages was probably Manahat. The name is mentioned in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible completed in Alexandria, Egypt in the 3rd century BCE), in the list of towns on the northern border of the Tribe of Judah. ([Joshua 15: 59](#)) An echo of the ancient name was preserved in the nearby Arab village of Malha and the modern Jerusalem neighborhood of Manhat.

A short distance from the site is a spring, the main source of water for the villages. Fertile land, forests and grazing areas in the region made continued settlement possible. Of the village houses, scattered over an area of about 12 acres, some 30 have been excavated. They were built on natural stone terraces on the gently sloping hillside, with open areas between them.

During the Israelite period, a new settlement was established on top of the

hill above the older village. Its inhabitants built stone terraces on the slopes of the hill for planting and many of the cleared fieldstones - not used for building of terraces - were placed in high piles on the remains of the earlier buildings. The houses of the Bronze Age village were thus well preserved, together with utensils used by its inhabitants.

## The Early Village

A village was founded in the Refa'im Valley at the end of the Early Bronze Age (2200-2000 BCE). The houses consisted of a single story with a varying number of different-sized rooms, built on exposed rock surfaces, sometimes next to low rock cliffs. Their walls were constructed of fired bricks on low stone foundations and the earthen floors were leveled with stone surfaces. The flat roofs were constructed of wooden beams and plaster, supported by wooden posts with stone bases recessed in the floors. In some of the buildings, cultic stelae, flat standing stones, were placed against the inner walls of rooms.

In the eastern part of the village, remains of several building complexes, each extending over an area of several hundred square meters, were exposed. Each complex consisted of a number of dwelling units with several rooms. Some houses had common walls and some were built around a courtyard, probably for livestock and for domestic activities. It is assumed that these complexes were the result of several building phases: first, a single unit was built by the father of the family; then units for the extended family were added. These clusters of buildings are indicative of settlement over a period of several generations.

The livelihood of the villagers was based on agriculture and herding. Agricultural crops included grains, lentils, olives and grapes, planted on small plots of land around the village and in the valley. Livestock consisted primarily of sheep and goats, herded for grazing on the surrounding hills, and hunting of wild animals supplemented the villagers' diet.

Pottery produced and used in the village was of hand-made coarse clay, well fired. Huwwar, the main material used by the village potters, was readily found in the limestone rock. This was mixed with sand mined from narrow, deep caves in the hard limestone within the village limits. The vessels produced were mainly large, barrel-shaped storage jars, cooking pots, cups and bowls.

The exposure of the Early Bronze Age village in the Refa'im Valley is of great importance for the study of settlement patterns at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE. Until now, researchers had believed that large cities, such as [Arad](#) and [Megiddo](#), were destroyed by nomadic tribes at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, and that for the next several hundred years, no permanent settlements existed in Canaan. With the exposure of the remains of other villages from the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, similar to that in the Refa'im Valley, it is now evident that a village culture replaced the destroyed urban one and that these rural settlements were established by the population that had abandoned the fortified cities.

## The Later Village

During the Middle Bronze Age (1750-1550 BCE), a new Canaanite village was established in the Refa'im Valley with most of its houses built on those of the earlier village. The walls were built to their full height of fieldstones, laid lengthwise in layers, with a mortar of clay, straw and gravel between them. These sturdy walls have been preserved to a height of 2 m. Most floors were made of rock surfaces leveled with earth where needed; some floors were made of laid stone slabs. Dwellings were once more built individually, according to family size and topography. Stone stairs connected rooms of differing levels and provided access to the upper stories.

Daily life in the Canaanite village in the Refa'im Valley is illustrated by the finds in the abandoned houses. These include numerous grinding stones for processing food, ovens for cooking and even a stone silo for grain storage. The grain cultivated here was harvested with wooden sickles into which flint blades had been inserted. Axes, knives, awls and bronze needles were also widely used in the village.

*The Temple.* In the southwestern part of the village and separate from its houses, was a rectangular (10 x 6 m.) building with thick, carefully constructed walls, which appears to have been the village temple. The entrance faced east and two short pilaster-walls extended from its façade. The internal space of the temple, which was paved with stone slabs, was divided by a partition into a narrow entrance room and a square hall. The temple stood in the center of a courtyard (*temenos*) surrounded by a stone fence. A small square room abutting the temple served for the storage of small clay votive vessels and a variety of cultic objects, which were found in the excavations.

The Canaanite village was situated within the area of control of the city-state of Jerusalem, the main city in this hill country, called "Shalem" in the Bible ([Genesis 33:18](#)) and "Urusalim" in royal Egyptian sources of that period. During the 18th century BCE, Jerusalem was fortified with an impressive wall, remains of which are currently being uncovered. The excavated village in the Refa'im Valley was part of a network of such rural settlements in the valley; it was a time of peace and the villagers became prosperous, selling their agricultural surplus in the markets of Jerusalem.

The remains of the houses of this Canaanite village have been preserved within the Biblical Zoo of Jerusalem.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## Nebi Samwil



Nebi Samwil is located on a hill (908 m. above sea level), some 5 km. north of [Jerusalem](#). The hill provides a good view of [Jerusalem](#) and controls the roads leading to the city from the north: the road from the Coastal Plain in the west and that from Samaria to the north of [Jerusalem](#). The large mosque with a high, round minaret on the top of the hill is clearly visible from [Jerusalem](#). It is revered by both [Jews](#) and [Muslims](#) because the cave beneath it is the traditional burial place of the prophet Samuel.

Tradition associates Nebi Samwil with biblical Ramah, the burial place of the prophet Samuel. ([I Samuel 25:1](#); [28:3](#)) But modern studies have

identified Nebi Samwil with biblical Mitzpa [see [Tell en-Nabeh](#) for a different view on where Mizpa was most likely located], a town of cultic importance in the territory of the [Tribe of Benjamin](#). ([Joshua 18:26](#) and [Judges 21:1-8](#)) Gedaliah son of Ahikam, who was appointed governor of Judah by the [Babylonians](#), lived in Mitzpa and was assassinated there. ([Jeremiah 41:1-10](#)) After the return from exile, the people of Mitzpa participated in repairing the walls of [Jerusalem](#) and in the building of the [Second Temple](#). ([Nehemiah 3:7, 19](#))

The cultic importance of Mitzpa to the Jews during the [Hellenistic](#) period is evident from a reference in I Maccabees 3:46: They assembled at Mitzpa, opposite Jerusalem, for in former times Israel had a place of worship at Mitzpa. The proximity of Mitzpa to Jerusalem and the discovery, in the archeological excavations, of finds from the First Temple period and from [Hasmonean](#) times, lend validity to the identification of the site as the biblical Mitzpa.

Comprehensive excavations were conducted at Nebi Samwil from 1992 to 1999. On the southeastern slopes of the site, previously unknown remains from the beginning of settlement there were found; they had not been damaged by the intensive construction activity of the [Crusaders](#). The Crusader fortress with its fortifications and the building complex outside its walls were uncovered.

## The Early Village

The first settlement, covering an estimated area of four acres, was founded at the end of the First Temple period (8th-7th centuries BCE) and continued to exist during the [Persian](#) period (6th-4th centuries BCE), as evidenced by pottery sherds and seals on handles of storage jars. Some of these are inscribed yhd, the name of the province of Judah under Persian rule. The settlement was based on agriculture: grain, grown in the broad fields in the plain to the north; olives, figs and grapes grown on the terraced hillsides. A spring on the northern slope of the hill provided water for the settlement.

During the [Hellenistic](#) period (2nd-1st centuries BCE) a large village was established under royal patronage, to protect the northern approaches to Jerusalem. The excavations uncovered the remains of several dwellings built on the hillside. The walls of the houses, some preserved to an impressive height of 4.5 m., indicate that they had two storeys. Also, a

section of a 3.5 m.-wide street was exposed for a length of 55 m. A complete dwelling, on the northern side of the street, is typical of the houses of Nebi Samwil during that period. Its area was 24 x 20 m. and it consisted of rooms surrounding a courtyard. The walls were constructed of carefully trimmed stones covered with high-quality plaster and the doorposts and lintels were made of ashlar. The upper storey of the buildings was reached from the higher, northern street, while the ground floor was entered from the southern, lower street. Rock-cut cisterns guaranteed the residents' water supply.

## The Byzantine Monastery

According to accounts by Hieronymous (beginning of 5th century) the bones of the prophet Samuel were brought from their place of burial in the Holy Land to the city of Chalcedon (in Asia Minor). Yet, in the same period, a monastery was built at Nebi Samwil in honor of the Prophet Samuel, which became a place of pilgrimage and served as a hostel for Christian pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. The monastery was restored and enlarged during the reign of Justinian (mid-6th century) and it continued to exist in the Early Arab period (7th–10th centuries). It was almost completely destroyed when the [Crusaders](#) built their fortress. Only a portion of mosaic pavement and a wine press remain. A very large number of [Byzantine](#) coins, some from faraway places, attest to the occupancy by pilgrims during this period.

A major pottery production center was established on the southern slope of the hill during the Early Arab period. Several pottery kilns, some with domed roofs intact, were uncovered in the excavations. Dozens of stamped jar handles with Arabic inscriptions, such as "Blessings to Yusuf" and "Blessings to Suleiman" and the name "Deir Samwil" [Monastery of Samuel] were found in the production waste pile.

## The Crusader Fortress

During the [Crusader](#) period Nebi Samwil gained symbolic significance, because from here, after a three-year journey, the Crusader army had its first glimpse of Jerusalem (7 July 1099). They called the hill Mons Gaudii [Mountain of Joy] and constructed a fortress there, to protect the northern approaches to Jerusalem from [Muslim](#) raids. Convoys of pilgrims also found shelter within its walls on their way to the Holy City. The church within the fortress was built in 1157 over the traditional tomb of the prophet Samuel.

The Crusader fortress was rectangular (100 x 67 m.) surrounded by walls and with a church at its center. The stones used to build the fortress were quarried on the top of the hill, creating 5 m.-high rock-cut cliffs on the northern and eastern sides of the fortress, upon which the walls were constructed. Strong terrace-walls were built on the southern and western sides, which artificially raised the base of the fortress. The walls were some 2 m. thick, built of large ashlar reinforced with cement; a large tower (7 x 6 m.) protected the southwestern corner, a smaller one the northwestern corner of the fortress. An additional large tower (6 x 6 m.) was built on the southern side.

Two gates in its western wall gave access to the fortress. They led directly into the courtyard in which the church stood. One gate, for everyday use, was approached via a ramp next to the wall; the second one was reached over a stone bridge, 28 m. long and 2.5 m. wide. The bridge was supported by a series of arches, ascending from north to south. Along the southwestern side of the fortress two long, underground vaults were built, the southern one 72 x 8 m. and along its inner, eastern side, a 46 x 6.4 m. vault. These vaults were part of the podium upon which the courtyard was built and relieved the pressure on the retaining walls of the fortress. The spaces thereby created were used for storage.

Of the large, elaborate Crusader church, which occupied most of the fortress' courtyard, only some architectural elements, such as capitals and marble columns, were found in the excavations. A mosque, preserving portions of the earlier structure, now stands on the central part of the Crusader church. An examination beneath the mosque revealed that the traditional tomb of the prophet Samuel is the crusader crypt, which was reached by descending stairs from the church.

North of the fortress compound a large, rock-cut camping area (47 x 37 m.) was prepared for use by the crusader army, and by groups of pilgrims. It had stables with rock-cut troughs in its eastern part, and a hostel for pilgrims was built on a bedrock terrace. This compound was protected in the east by a watchtower erected on a large square base hewn out of the bedrock.

The fortress was pillaged in 1187 by the Muslims under the command of Salah ed-Din (Saladin) and was later destroyed to its foundations, for fear of falling once more into Crusader hands. A collapse of hundreds of stones, in its southeastern corner, bears witness to the destruction.

In the ensuing centuries, Nebi Samwil, as the traditional tomb of the prophet Samuel, became a place of pilgrimage for Jews, until a mosque was built there in 1730. It was badly damaged in 1917, during a battle between British and Turkish forces. The mosque was restored after World War I and took on its present appearance.

Remains of all periods of settlement at Nebi Samwil have been preserved at the site. Particularly impressive are the remains of the Crusader fortifications, now exposed after removal of the debris that had covered it for centuries. Above the ancient remains stands the mosque with its high minaret, a landmark clearly visible from a considerable distance.

The excavations were directed by Y. Magen on behalf of the Archeological Staff in Judea and Samaria.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#). Photograph of Samuel's Tomb courtesy of [Jack Hazut](#)

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### The Nimrod Fortress: Muslim Stronghold in the Golan

The Nimrod Fortress (*Kal'at al-Subeiba* in Arabic), is situated in the northern [Golan](#), on a ridge rising some 800 meters above sea level. It is named after a biblical hero, the hunter Nimrod ([Genesis 10:8-9](#)) who, according to local tradition, dwelt on this summit. The fortress overlooks the deep, narrow valley separating Mt. Hermon from the [Golan Heights](#) and the road linking the Galilee with Damascus (in present-day Syria). The fortress was founded in the Middle Ages, probably by the Crusaders, to defend the city of [Banias](#) in the valley below against Muslim incursions. Later, the Muslim rulers of Damascus rebuilt it to defend their border against the [Crusaders](#). During the 12th-13th centuries, it changed hands several times, but it was maintained and strengthened mainly by the Muslims, as attested to by the numerous Arabic inscriptions found incorporated into the building.

The fortifications follow the contours of the long, narrow ridge and are visible to this day. The fortress measures 420 m. in length and 60-150 m. in width and is built of large, carefully squared stones. Along the walls, particularly on the southern side where extra strength was required, numerous rectangular and semi-circular towers, roofed with pointed cross-arches, were erected. Water was stored in rock-cut plastered pools below the fortress, accessible via protected staircases, thus guaranteeing the supply of water in times of siege.

Overlooking the high, eastern edge of the fortress stood a large keep (a dungeon-fortress within a fortress), measuring 65 x 45 m. and protected by massive rectangular towers. In the west, it was separated from the main



fortress by a moat, access being provided by a bridge. The keep served as living quarters for the commander of the fortress; in time of siege it became an additional inner defense position.

During 1993-94, the debris which blocked the tower-gate on the western side of the fortress were cleared. On this side, a deep moat cut into the rock, probably with a drawbridge, protected its entrance. The gate-tower, according to an inscription inside it, was built by the Ayyubid ruler al-Aziz Othman in 1230. The double-paneled entrance doors were locked with wooden beams inserted into grooves in the doorjambs. Also well preserved is the narrow groove for lowering the defensive iron net (portcullis).

Fragments of a monumental Arabic inscription of considerable length indicate that the [Mamluk](#) sultan Baibars restored the gate-tower in 1275. This new gate house was constructed of particularly large, well-trimmed stones weighing several tons each; it measured 29 x 23 m. and was 30 m. high.

A large cistern was hewn in the rock beneath and a narrow staircase connected the tower's different stories. A 27-meter-long stepped, secret passage led from the gate tower to the outside. It would have enabled the defenders of the fortress to launch a surprise attack on besiegers, or if necessary, to flee from it.

At the end of the 13th century, the Muslim conquest of the port city of Acre on the Mediterranean signified the end of [Crusader](#) rule in the Holy Land. The Nimrod fortress lost its strategic value and fell into disrepair; the ruins visible today bear silent witness to its past might.

*The excavations were directed by M. Hartal on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority*

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Source: [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Qumran



Qumran (in Arabic: Khirbet Qumran; its ancient name is unknown) is located on the northwestern shore of the [Dead Sea](#), several kilometers south of [Jericho](#). In a cave in the Judean Desert cliffs south of Qumran, Bedouins in 1947 found the first [Dead Sea scrolls](#). Following this discovery, Qumran was excavated by the Dominican Father R. de Vaux in the years 1951-56. A complex of buildings, extending over an area of 100 x 80 m. was uncovered, dating to the [Second Temple](#) period.

The location of the site and its plan, the scrolls found in the vicinity and the simple ceramic vessels of the inhabitants, bear witness in de Vaux's view, to a settlement of the [Essene](#) sect. We also know of the presence of the Essenes in the Judean Desert and near the Dead Sea from the writings of Pliny the Elder. (Naturalis Historia V, 17)

The view of Qumran as an Essene center is opposed by those who propose that the site was a villa, an inn or a fortress. These views are not supported by archeological evidence, and most scholars accept de Vaux's interpretation. Recently, an ostrakon (a potsherd with writing) with several lines of Hebrew script, was found at Qumran. It is a contract in which a man named Honi bestows his possessions, including a building, an olive and a fig orchard, to a group called *yahad* (Hebrew, together). If this reading is correct, it provides evidence for identifying the sect that inhabited Qumran, and the name by which members of the group designated themselves. The term occurs in other manuscripts of the Essenes.



## Qumran

At the end of the [First Temple](#) period (8th-7th centuries BCE), a first settlement was established at the site. Sparse remains of a small, fortified farmhouse or Judahite fort were found. The site was identified by some as Secacah, or the City of Salt, two of the six cities in the desert territory of Judah. ([Joshua 15:61-62](#))

Settlement at Qumran was renewed at the end of the 2nd century BCE, probably during the reign of the [Hasmonean](#) King John Hyrcanus I, when the existing structure was restored and enlarged. Then, at the beginning of the 1st century BCE, during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, renewed building determined the plan of the site until its destruction. An aqueduct was built from a cliff above Wadi Qumran several hundred meters east of the site. Winter floodwaters were collected behind a dam at the foot of the cliff and from there flowed in the aqueduct to Qumran and filled the numerous cisterns and mikva'ot (ritual baths) there. The supply of water was essential to a permanent settlement at Qumran, where summer temperatures in this desert region are extremely high.

The plan of Qumran is unique, not at all similar to other contemporary settlements, with its many large halls, undoubtedly serving public functions, and the relatively small number of living quarters. The main entrance to the settlement was in the north, at the foot of a watchtower. The walls of the buildings were made of stones gathered at the foot of the cliff and plastered with thick, white-gray plaster. The windows and doorposts were built of well-trimmed stones and the roofs, as was common in that period, were constructed of wooden beams, straw and plaster.



The main structure at Qumran had several rooms, some obviously two stories high, arranged around a central courtyard. In the northwestern corner was a square watchtower with particularly thick walls that rose above the rest of the settlement. The tower served as a lookout and warning post and protected the settlement against raids by desert tribes. A room with benches built along its walls served as a

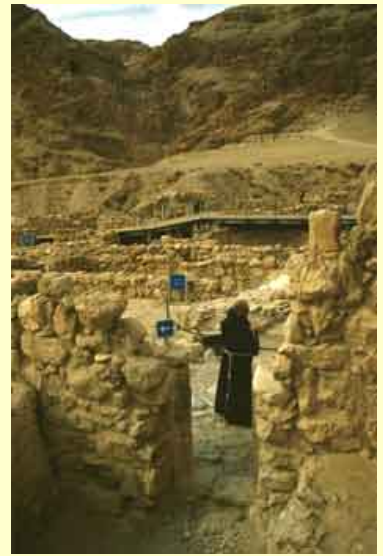
meeting-place for the members of the community and probably as a place for [Torah](#) (Bible) study. Additional building complexes, south and east of the main building contained long halls, rooms and ritual baths. One of the large halls was for meetings and served as a refectory. In a storage room and a kitchen next to it, neat piles of hundreds of pottery vessels and a large number of small food bowls were found. A workshop, in which pottery vessels for use of the community were produced, was discovered in the southeastern part of the site. The workshop included a basin for preparing the clay, a potters wheel made of stone and two round kilns for firing.

A large number of mikva'ot (ritual baths) was found throughout the site. Excavated into the marl soil, they were waterproofed with thick, gray hydraulic plaster. The broad staircase leading to the bottom was at times divided down the middle by a low (20 cm.-high) wall, which separated those descending for immersion from those leaving after purification. The ritual baths were fed by water from the aqueduct. Mikva'ot similar to those at Qumran were typical of public and private buildings in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Second Temple period. The [Mishnah](#) (*Masekhet Mikva'ot*) notes the importance of immersion in water for spiritual purification and lists the requirements for such ritual baths. The mikva'ot at Qumran were built according to all these requirements. Unusual at Qumran is the large number of these installations and the size of some of them, relative to the settlement. The latter probably served the members of the community for communal immersion, a central part in their daily rituals.

An earthquake severely damaged the buildings and mikva'ot of Qumran in 31 BCE. Excavations revealed cracks in walls and a thick layer of ash from a fire that had raged. The earthquake was mentioned by [Josephus](#). (Antiquities 15, 121 ff.; Wars I, 370 ff.)



The settlement at Qumran was subsequently abandoned, until the beginning of the 1st century CE, when members of the community returned and settled there once more. They restored the earlier structures and, with various additions and modifications, used them. In the main building was a long room, in which remains of benches, or low tables, made of mud and plastered on the outside, as well as small clay inkwells were found. According to the excavator, these finds indicate that the room was a scriptorium, where the settlement's scribes copied the holy writings and the laws governing the community.



Perhaps only a few dozen of the leaders of the community lived permanently at Qumran. Most of the members of the sect, probably totaling several thousand, lived in villages and cities. A large Essene community certainly lived in Jerusalem (according to [Josephus](#), the name of the gate in the southern wall of Jerusalem, at Mt. Zion, was called the Essenes' Gate). For certain periods of time, members of the sect lived in the desert near Qumra

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## The Ram of Atlit

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It is the only known ram of its kind in existence in the world and considered to be one of the largest bronze finds of antiquity. Found in 1980 in the waters of Atlit (south of [Haifa](#)) this three-pronged ram has contributed much to the knowledge of naval warfare. Many people are familiar with the battering ram used on land, but are not aware of the existence of a similar weapon in naval engagements.

Iconographic representations, (from the eighth century BCE on) all show a ship bearing a ram. Naval rams underwent various changes throughout the years. Single pointed rams seem to have been used most often, but had the disadvantage of breaking easily. These types of rams, which only created a hole in the enemy ship, caused limited damage. It was also dangerous, since the attacking ship could find itself literally entangled in the enemy ship, when its ram would be caught in the enemy ship's hull and the attacking ship would find itself unable to disengage itself from its prey.

Later naval rams took on the shape of an animal's head. The three-pronged ram (such as the Ram of Atlit) developed at the end of the sixth century BCE and had the advantage of shattering an enemy ship's hull, creating damage that could not be repaired at sea. The Phoenicians, [Greeks](#), [Romans](#) and Etruscans throughout the Mediterranean used the three-pronged ram in naval battles.

An impressive artifact, the Ram of Atlit, is on display at the National Maritime Museum. Shaped like a chariot, the ram was found devoid of its ship and was probably made in Cyprus. It features mythological symbols including eagles, a thunderbolt and more. The existence of and use of three-pronged rams is known from a variety of sources including, coins, pottery



etc. But the Ram of Atlit is the only actual known specimen of this type. It weighs 465 kilograms (almost half a ton) and is composed of 90.1% copper, 9.5% tin and trace elements of iron and sulphur.

The National Maritime Museum covers 5,000 years of maritime history while emphasizing the ongoing relationship between Eretz Israel (and Jews) to the sea. The museum features underwater archaeological finds, ship models, a large collection of antique maps, pottery, coins and more. The museum is located just above the Clandestine Immigration and Naval Museum and is also within walking distance of [Elijah's Cave](#).

The museum is located at 198 Allenby Street, Haifa, 31447, 04/853-6622, TEL 04/853-9286 FAX

Visiting Hours: Sun., Mon., Wed. 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Tues. and Thurs. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Fri., 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM and Sat. 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM.

Entry fees: Adults, 20 NIS/pp, Children, Students and Senior Citizens, 15 NIS/pp.

Group rates, 15 NIS/pp, Children, Students and Senior Citizens, 12 NIS/pp. Guided tours in English for groups are available for 250 NIS.

Note: An option is available to purchase a combined ticket (valid for one month) to three museums, the National Maritime Museum, the Haifa Museum and the Israel National Museum of Science. Ticket prices are as follows, Family, 80 NIS, Adults, 33 NIS/pp., Children, 20 NIS/pp.

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## Ramat Rahel

Ramat Rahel is located on a hilltop about halfway between the [Old City](#) of [Jerusalem](#) and [Bethlehem](#). Excavations carried out between 1959 and 1962 uncovered remains of several successive periods of occupation. The most important are those of a large citadel and a magnificent palace of the [kings of Judah](#), dated to the 8th-7th centuries BCE.

The site was identified by the excavator as biblical Beit Hakerem (House of the Vineyard), one of the places from which warning fire signals were sent to [Jerusalem](#) at the end of the [First Temple](#) period. ([Jeremiah 6:1](#))

### The Biblical Period

During the 8th century BCE, a royal citadel was built here by one of the [kings of Judah](#). Of this citadel only a small section of a casemate wall (a double fortification wall with compartments), remained. But more than a hundred seal impressions of the *lamelekh* (Hebrew, to the King) type, stamped on handles of storage jars, were found and are associated with the early days of this citadel. They are indicative of the site's importance as an administrative center of the Kingdom of Judah.

Towards the end of the 7th - beginning of the 6th century BCE, a new royal citadel, much larger than its predecessor, was built on the site; it had an outer fortification system, and an inner citadel with a palace.

The outer fortification system was composed of a massive, 3 - 4 m.-wide wall. Though only small portions of it were exposed, it may be assumed that it encircled an area of some five acres on the top of the hill. Inside this

wall, no building remains were found. It is believed that this large courtyard served for mustering troops and chariotry.

The inner citadel, measuring 75 x 50 m., stood at the northeastern corner of the courtyard. It was surrounded by a 5 m.-wide casemate wall. The rooms in the wall had floors covered with a thick, hard plaster, which suggests that they were storerooms.

The gate to the inner citadel was in the center of the eastern wall and was reinforced with buttresses. It had two cells, one on each side of the entrance, with floors of massive stone flags. The gate was closed with inner and outer double doors. A narrower opening into the inner citadel was located in the same wall, several meters to the south.

The area inside the citadel was divided into a stone-paved courtyard with buildings along the northern and western sides. The northern building consisted of an open, inner courtyard surrounded by several rooms, and it probably served as the king's residence. A narrow, hidden postern, built of large stones under the northern wall connected the citadel with the outside, providing an escape passage.

The royal citadel at Ramat Rahel is one of the most instructive examples of Israelite-Phoenician architecture in the biblical period. The construction of the casemate walls and the buildings of the citadel was of excellent quality, with smoothed and squared stones laid in well-fitted courses. The main gate, built of large, dressed stones also shows fine workmanship. Several complete proto-Aeolic capitals were found in the ruins of the citadel; they once decorated the doorposts of the main gate and the entrances to the buildings.

Window balustrades consisting of a row of stone colonnettes, decorated with palmettes and topped with joined capitals in the proto-Aeolic style, were also found. They probably adorned the upper story of the buildings inside the citadel. These decorative architectural elements echo a verse in the book of Jeremiah, which describes the windows in the house of Jehoiakim king of Judah: and cut out windows for it, paneling it with cedar, and painting it with vermillion... (Jeremiah 22:14)

In the debris that covered the citadel after its destruction by the [Babylonians](#), many luxury objects, such as imported [Assyrian](#) palace ware were found. A unique find is a seal impression with the inscription to Eliaqim, steward of Yochin is ascribed to an official of King Jehoiachin,

king of Judah, who was the son of King Jehoiakim.

## Later periods

Beit Hakerem was a district center during the [Persian Period](#), ([Nehemiah 3:14](#)) as confirmed by archeological finds. Dozens of seal impressions on jar handles from the 4th-3rd centuries BCE were uncovered. They bear the inscription *yehud*, the official name of the province of Judah in this period. Some are inscribed *yehud hphh* (the governor of the district of Judah) while several others bear only the names of governors. From the [Hasmonean](#) period (2nd century BCE), many seal impressions on jar handles with the name *yrshlm* (Jerusalem) were found.

During the [Herodian](#) period (1st century CE), a small settlement existed at the site. After its destruction in 70 CE, it was abandoned until the 3rd century, when the Roman Tenth Legion built a villa and a bathhouse on the hill.

During the [Byzantine](#) period (mid-5th century), a large monastery and a basical church were built here; they were abandoned in the Early [Islamic](#) period (7th century).

The excavations were conducted by Y. Aharoni on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities (today's Israel Antiquities Authority), the Israel Exploration Society, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Rome.

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### Ramla: Arab Capital of the Province of Palestine

Ramla is located in the coastal plain, some 15 km. east of Tel Aviv. The city was built at the crossroads of two major routes: the *via maris*, along the coast, and the road that connected the port of Jaffa with Jerusalem. The origin of the name Ramla is in the Arabic word *raml*, meaning "sand", and apparently refers to the sand dunes on which the city was built.

According to historical sources, Ramla was founded at the beginning of the 8th century by the Umayyad Calif Suleiman ibn Abd el-Malik. It served as the Umayyad and Abbasid capital of the Province of Palestine (*Jund Filistin*), and the seat of Arab governors of the province in the 8th and 9th centuries. In the 14th century, Ramla regained importance for a short time as the provincial capital of the [Mamluks](#).

The remains of Arab Ramla lie buried under the present-day city, making archeological research difficult. Results of excavations carried out in 1949 and limited salvage excavations conducted since, indicate that the city has been continuously inhabited since its foundation.

The best known historical building in Ramla is the "White Mosque" and the minaret next to it. The remains of the original structure, erected at the beginning of the 8th century during Umayyad rule, were incorporated in the restoration work by Salah al-Din (Saladin) at the end of the 12th century. The minaret was built during the [Mamluk](#) period, in the 14th century.

The White Mosque (93 x 84 m.) is oriented to the cardinal points. It is

surrounded by walls, with a main gate in the east and a secondary entrance in the north. At the center of the structure is a large, open courtyard; along its southern wall, a 12 m. wide mosque was built, its ceiling consisting of cross-vaulting supported at the center by a row of piers. In its wall facing the courtyard is a row of 12 openings between pilasters supporting the ceiling of the mosque on this side. The ceiling of the mosque and its western portion are additions made during the restoration work by Salah al-Din, as is the mihrab (prayer niche) in the southern wall facing Mecca.

Under the courtyard the Umayyads constructed enormous, even-sized cisterns for storage of water which remain intact to this day. Broad pilasters support the barrel-domed ceilings of the cisterns. They were filled with rainwater collected from the area around the mosque and with water carried by an aqueduct from the springs in the hills east of Ramla. These reservoirs provided water for the worshipers at the mosque and filled the pool for ablutions at the center of the courtyard, of which only the foundation remains today. An Arabic inscription in Kufic script, which was found in the excavations, relates to the restoration of the plaster in the year 1408.

The square minaret, several stories high, built by the [Mamluks](#) in the 14th century, stands to this day. Inside, it has a central staircase which takes one to the roof. In the outer walls of the minaret are long, narrow windows in recessed arches. An Arabic inscription on the lintel above the entrance to the minaret states that it was constructed during the reign of the [Mamluk](#) Sultan Muhammad ibn Qala'un in 1318.

Some 500 m. northeast of the White Mosque is an intact subterranean vaulted water reservoir; it was constructed by the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid in the year 768 to safeguard the water supply of the city.

A large and varied assemblage of pottery from the Umayyad period was found in the excavations. It indicates that Ramla was also a center of pottery production during this period.

In excavations outside the White Mosque and at a number of sites in the city, several buildings from the Umayyad, Abbasid and [Mamluk](#) periods were found, verifying that Ramla was indeed founded on sand dunes during the Umayyad period. From that period, fragmentary remains of several large structures, probably of public and administrative nature, were found.

Of particular interest is a portion of an Umayyad- period mosaic floor with



geometric patterns. The frames dividing the floor are each decorated with a different motif, among them grape clusters, pomegranates, an eight-pointed star and the figure of a cat and birds. The southern part of the mosaic depicts a prayer niche (mihrab), consisting of two pillars supporting an arch which frames an Arabic inscription in Kufic script, including a quotation from the [Koran](#): Be thou not among the negligent – intended as an encouragement to pray. This mosaic prayer niche is the oldest known in Islamic art.

Excavations: 1949 – by J. Kaplan and subsequent excavations by M. Ben-Dov, M. Rosen Ayalon and A. Eitan, A. Druks and M. Brosh on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities (today, the Israel Antiquities Authority); 1996 – O. Gutfeld, on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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## Recent Archeological Discoveries

(1999)

by Hillel Geva

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### Jerusalem – The Tomb of a Chained Anchorite

On a hill near the Jerusalem – Bethlehem road, a subterranean complex of cells dating to the Byzantine period, was uncovered in 1991. It was composed of a stepped entryway leading to an antechamber lined with masonry and containing eight rectangular niches, probably used for storing personal effects and books. The innermost cell (1.75 x 0.85m, 1.70 m. high) was also partly lined with masonry and had small niches with a ceramic bowl in each; a lamp-holder was suspended from the ceiling.

On the floor lay the skeleton of a 24-26 year-old ascetic; it was on its side, the legs bent sideways, and an iron chain wound four times around the pelvis and back and over the shoulders. The chain, with a total length of six meters, weighs six kilograms and is made of 50 mm.-long links.

The skeleton is that of a Christian recluse who chose to live as an anchorite in this subterranean cell. The wearing of heavy chains was an accepted way of mortifying the flesh, to prevent impure thoughts and ensure celibacy. The anchorite's secluded habitation became his burial chamber and a round memorial structure, 9.4 m. in diameter, was later erected above it.

### Yodfat

A mass grave was discovered in the remains of the Jewish city of Yodfat in the Galilee. Bones of at least 30 individuals were found in a water cistern, in which they had been deposited. The find provides vivid evidence of Josephus Flavius' eye-witness account of the bloody battle that took place there in 67 CE, during the Jewish Revolt. He reported that at the end of the fighting the Jewish survivors committed suicide and that he himself surrendered to the Romans.

### Tiberias – A Hoard of Metal Objects

Three large pottery jars of the Fatimid period (10th - 11th century) were uncovered in 1998 during excavations at the southern end of ancient Tiberias. The jars, hidden under the floor of a building, contained some 500 artifacts of bronze and copper, in an excellent state of preservation: candlesticks, lampstands, bowls, cups, ewers, bottles, small boxes, incense burners, oil lamps, bells and small sculpted birds and snakes. The objects were made in a variety of techniques of casting and hammering and some have intricate punched and engraved decorations and Arabic inscriptions.

This is the largest assemblage of metal artifacts from the Fatimid period found to date in Israel. Many coins with Christian symbols, from this period, were also found. This may indicate that the artifacts belonged to a Christian merchant or metal-smith. Why the treasure was hidden is not known, but it was probably related to the conquest of Tiberias by the Crusaders in 1099.



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Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the *New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* and editor of *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*.

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# Recent Archeological Discoveries

(2003)

by [Hillel Geva](#)

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## An Early Islamic Fortress at Ashdot Yam

The fortress is located on the shoreline, some 30 km. south of [Tel Aviv](#). It was excavated between the years 1997-1999.

The rectangular fortress (60x40 m.) is built of well-dressed kurkar stones bonded with mortar. The walls, preserved to a height of 8 m., are 2 m. thick and reinforced on the outside by a series of piers, 3-4 m. apart. Eight towers protect the fortress: the western towers, facing the sea, are square; the eastern towers are round. Two pairs of semi-circular towers guard the two gates leading into the citadel.

Vaulted rooms were built along the walls of the central courtyard. A small bathhouse, consisting of a well, two bathtubs and a furnace for heating the water, is located in the northern part of the courtyard. In its center stood a small mosque (13x3 m.), its mihrab (prayer niche) facing Mecca.

This fortress was built during the [Umayyad](#) period (late 7th - early 8th century) to protect the southern coastline against marauders from the sea. It was in use until the [Crusader period](#).

## Two Engraved Bronze Plaques from Tel Dan

Fragments of two engraved bronze plaques, dated to the 9th century [BCE](#), were recently found at [Tel Dan](#) in northern [Israel](#). The fragments, each about 9 cm. in diameter, were discovered in a well-planned building of several rooms situated in a large paved courtyard outside the city walls of biblical Dan. The building was probably part of a hutzot, a market place outside the city walls; the term hutzot (Heb. lit. "outsides") appears several times in the [Bible](#), e.g. [I Kings 20:34](#).

On the right side of one plaque is a scene depicting a human figure (king?) with upraised arms, standing behind a table covered with cloth; on the left is a throne, probably of a god or goddess, and at top center is the royal symbol of the winged sun-disk. A bull is depicted in the lower part of the second plaque, with a human figure with outstretched arms standing on it; wings appear to spread from this figure - probably the depiction of a goddess; to the left stands another human figure with outstretched arms.

Many parallels of such scenes are known from Neo-Hittite art, which was widespread in the Aramean Kingdoms (northern [Syria](#) today) during this period.

## **The Davidson Exhibition and Reconstruction Center in Jerusalem**

The newly opened Davidson Center is located at the entrance to the Jerusalem Archeological Park, near the [Dung Gate](#) of the [Old City](#). Located in the 7th-century Umayyad Palace, the center presents the 5,000-year-old history of [Jerusalem](#) through archeological exhibits and audio-visual presentations. Especially noteworthy is the virtual reality reconstruction of the [Temple Mount](#), allowing visitors to enjoy a "real-time" tour of the area.

For further information, see the park's website: [www.archpark.org.il](http://www.archpark.org.il)





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Credits: Israel Information Center, Jerusalem 2003 No. 8

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## The Rockefeller Museum

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Intensified [archeological](#) activity in the Holy Land in the first decades of the 20th century prompted the need for a dignified venue to store and exhibit the finds. American philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller, donated \$2 million for building, equipping and maintaining a museum, and the British [mandatory government](#) also provided a subsidy. Rockefeller stipulated that the museum bearing his name be an archeological, not a natural science museum, and that the museum's exhibits should shed light on the part played by the peoples of the Holy Land in world history. The building was to be located opposite the northeast corner of [Jerusalem's](#) Old City walls. After [1948](#), when the area came under Jordanian rule, the museum was administered briefly by an international council, but, recognizing its tremendous value, the Jordanian government soon nationalized it. Since 1968, the Rockefeller Museum has been an integral part of the [Israel Museum](#).

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Source: Mitchell G. Bard and Moshe Schwartz. [\*1001 Facts Everyone Should Know About Israel\*](#). NJ: Jason Aronson, 2004.

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## Rogem Hiri: An Ancient Mysterious Construction

The megalithic complex of Rogem Hiri (Rujm al-Hiri in Arabic, meaning “stone heap of the wild cat”) is located in the central [Golan](#), some 16 km. east of the [Sea of Galilee](#), on a desolate plateau of basalt boulders. Since its discovery in a survey of the [Golan](#) in the late 1960s, this mysterious site has aroused the curiosity of archeologists. Between 1988 and 1991, archeological excavations and research were conducted in order to establish facts and determine the time of its construction and its function.

Rogem Hiri is a monumental construction of local basalt fieldstones of various sizes. It consists of two architectural units: four concentric circles enclosing a central, round cairn. The outer, largest circle is about 500 m. long and 156 m. in diameter. The walls are of varying width, of up to 3.5 m., and have been preserved to a height of 2.5 m., obliterated in some parts by stone collapse. Several radial walls connect the circular walls, creating a labyrinth-like structure which has only two entryways, one facing northeast, the other southeast.

At the center of the circles is a cairn, an irregular heap of stones. It is 20-25 m. in diameter and preserved to a height of 6 m. The cairn consists of a central mound of stones surrounded by a lower belt, which gives it the appearance of a stepped, truncated cone. A geophysical survey using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) revealed the pile of stones to be hollow. A built burial chamber, with a narrow corridor leading to it, was discovered there. The chamber is round, roughly 2 m. in diameter, built of large stone plates arranged on top of each other, but slightly slanting inwards. It was covered by two massive slabs of basalt, each weighing

over 5.5 tons, which created a semi-corbelled dome over the burial chamber.

Rogem Hiri is one of the most intriguing archeological sites in Israel. A variety of theories concerning the function of this structure, which has no parallel in the Middle East, had been proposed prior to the current research: a religious center; a defensive enclosure; a large burial complex; a center for astronomical observation; and a calendrical device. The structure was even identified as the tomb of Og, King of the Bashan and last of the giants. ([Deuteronomy 3:11](#))

Rogem Hiri was also regarded as an astronomical observatory – a sort of Middle Eastern Stonehenge. This theory is supported by the fact that the eastern side, facing the rising sun, was built with much greater care. Also, the only two entryways are located on that side, the northeastern one roughly oriented towards the solstitial sunrise on 21 June.

The archeologists who excavated the site offer other possible explanations. According to one view, the concentric circles were built during the Early Bronze Age, in the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE, as a cultic and ceremonial center, where nomadic people in the process of becoming sedentary gathered annually; and that much later, during the late Bronze Age (1400 – 1300 BCE) the cairn containing the burial chamber was added (it was robbed of its contents in antiquity and only a few artifacts were found, including gold earrings and bronze arrowheads). Measurements revealed that the cairn is not located in the center of the concentric circles, supporting the view that the stone pile was a later addition.

According to another view, the architecture of Rogem Hiri proves that both the concentric circles and the cairn were parts of a single structure. There is no evidence for a cultic structure below the cairn and artifacts typical of known cultic centers of that period were not found. Rogem Hiri was therefore a monumental commemorative tomb – the mausoleum of an Early Bronze Age leader in the Golan; the tomb was cleared of its early burial remains in the Late Bronze Age, and then reused for burial. The size of the site reflects centralized organization and leadership capable of carrying out an engineering project of such proportions (it is estimated that 42,000 tons of stones had to be transported!).

The riddle of Rogem Hiri remains unsolved. Those who built it some 5,000 years ago left the stage of history and took with them the secrets of this unusual site.

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Source: Bet She'arim: The Jewish necropolis of the Roman Period. [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## The Roman Boat from the Sea of Galilee

In the winter of 1986, after several years of drought, the water level of the Sea of Galilee had dropped by several meters and the shoreline had receded considerably. Two young men, walking along the shore south of their kibbutz - Ginosar, situated on the western bank of the lake — noticed the outline of a boat in the mud. Experts called in to examine the discovery concluded that the remains of an ancient boat had been found. It was decided to excavate it immediately, before the possible rise of the water level.

Innovative and sophisticated techniques were required for lifting and moving the boat. First, a massive dike was built around the site to prevent the lake from inundating it, while pumps were used to keep the groundwater out. The wood had to be kept wet during the removal of the silt from inside the hull, which was then strengthened with fiberglass and filled with polyurethane. Tunnels were dug under the boat and its sides strengthened. When the extremely fragile remains of the boat were safely packed, water was pumped into the big pit that had been created during the excavation, and the boat was floated to shore. It was placed in a specially built conservation pool at the Yigal Allon Museum of Kibbutz Ginosar, where the polyurethane casing was removed and the boat re-submerged in water. In a process which took several years, synthetic wax was added to the wood, to give it sufficient structural strength for display outside the pool.

The boat was found lying perpendicular to the shore, its stern toward the lake; only the lower portion of the rounded stern was preserved. The boat's length is 8.2 m., its width 2.3 m. and its depth 1.2 m. It was built in the known "shell first" fashion, with mortise and tenon joinery and constructed mainly of cedar planks and oak frames. Much of the wood

was in secondary use, i.e., it had been removed from older, obsolete boats. Additional wood fragments were uncovered nearby, attesting that the boat was found in a place that had served as a shipyard. It was large enough to carry 15 people, including a crew of five. Though apparently used for fishing, it may also have transported passengers and goods.

By the construction techniques and two pottery vessels found near it, archeologists judged that the boat was from the Roman period. Carbon-14 tests confirmed that the boat had been constructed and used between 100 BCE and 70 CE.

The few details known about boats on the Sea of Galilee during Roman times are from written sources, such as Josephus Flavius and the New Testament, and from mosaic floors depicting boats. The discovery of this ancient boat of the Sea of Galilee therefore received worldwide attention.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## Sha'ar Hagolan: A Neolithic Village

When the members of Kibbutz Sha'ar Hagolan dug fishponds in their fields in 1943, they accidentally uncovered a prehistoric site. Partially excavated from 1948 to 1962, under the direction of M. Stekelis of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the unique culture found there became known as the Yarmukian or Sha'ar Hagolan Culture. New excavations, since 1989, uncovered impressive remains of a neolithic village, dating to 5,500 - 5,000 BCE.

The village spreads over hundreds of dunams (one dunam = 1/4 acre). It is located south of the Sea of Galilee, on the bank of the Yarmuk River which flows into the Jordan just south of the site. Several buildings with rectangular and circular rooms were uncovered: the foundations consist of courses of fieldstones topped with courses of loaf-shaped, sun-dried mudbricks; the walls are sturdily constructed; the floors are beaten earth; and the ceilings were of straw and mud over wooden frames. A variety of vessels was found, including flat basalt slabs and concave basalt mortars for domestic use.

At the center of the village stood a very large, extremely well-constructed building, obviously serving some public functions. It has a courtyard reached from the narrow, winding alley which runs between the houses of the village. Several rectangular rooms with particularly thick walls and one circular room, which served as a silo, were built around the courtyard.

The abundance of artifacts found in the village is indicative of a developed mixed-economy culture of fishing, hunting and grain-cultivating. Flint tools were widely used. They were made by advanced methods from flint cores – pebbles collected from the river banks – and

include sickle blades with one denticulated side, which were inserted into handles of bone or wood; arrowheads, some large, elongated and curved, others very small and triangular, delicately retouched; also polished axes, scrapers, awls and burins.

During this period, when pottery vessels first appeared in the Middle East, the potters of Sha'ar Hagolan produced a variety of sophisticated, well-fired vessels – round open shapes for bowls and closed forms for jars, many with flat bases on which they stood firmly. The most typical decorations were incised herringbone patterns within parallel lines, sometimes also with red, painted bands.

The outstanding characteristic of the Yarmukian culture is its art. The artistic and cultic objects include engraved and incised pebbles and small stone and clay figurines. Anthropomorphic statuettes of clay were assembled from separately made body parts. The facial features, particularly the protruding eyes, are somewhat grotesque. The large number of fertility figurines, probably representing the "goddess mother," reflect a cult based on the life cycle.

The finds from the Neolithic village of Sha'ar Hagolan are illustrative of new, previously unknown aspects of the Neolithic culture in Israel. Until these discoveries, the view prevailed that the Neolithic populations of the region were nomadic pastoralists who lived in temporary settlements of primitive, semi-subterranean huts. Sha'ar Hagolan was undoubtedly a permanent village with well-constructed houses and a large communal building.

*The excavations were directed by Y. Garfinkel on behalf of the Institute of Archeology of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.*

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Source: [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/shaar.html)

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## Shechem (Nablus)

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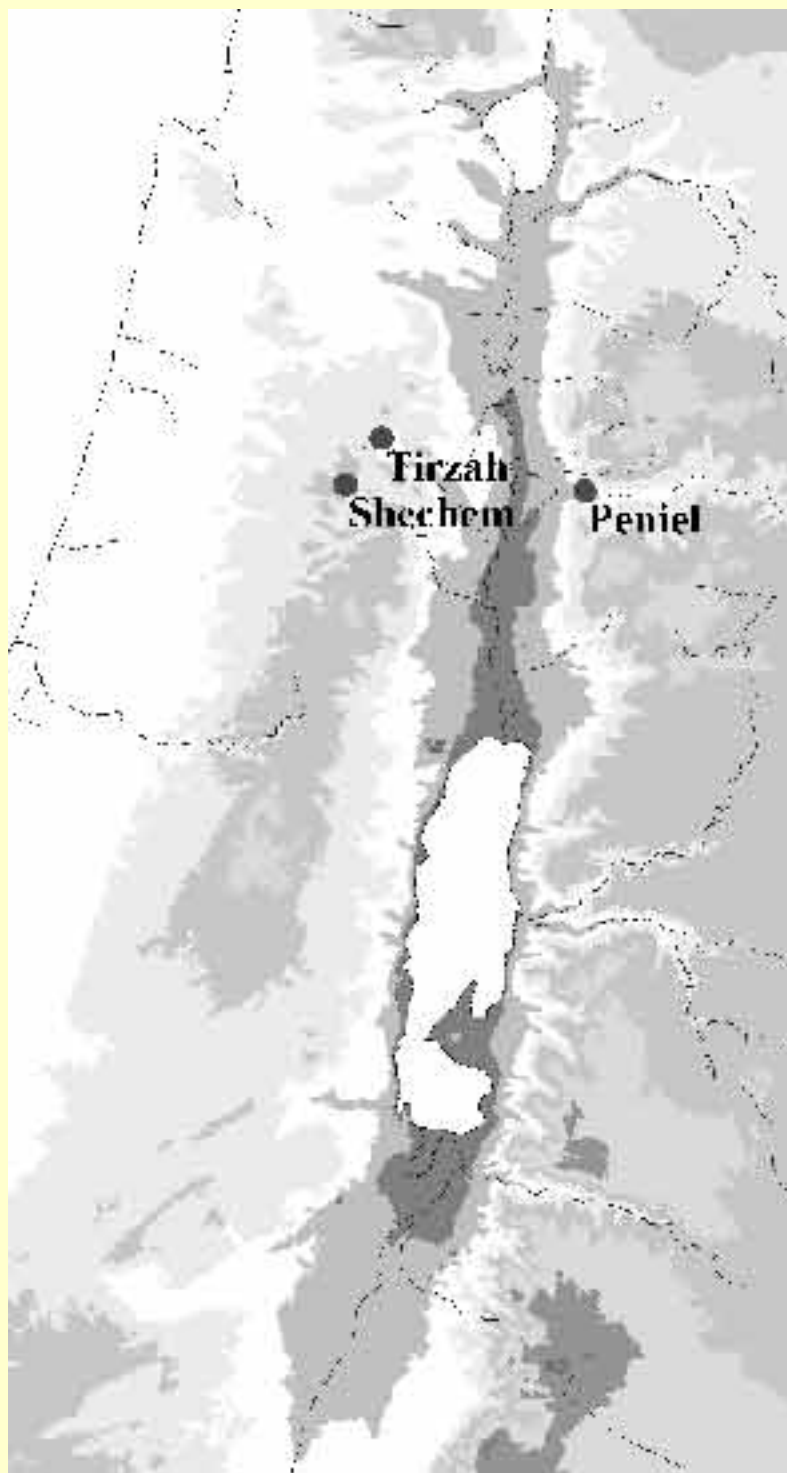
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### 1 Name and Location

The Hebrew name is probably derived from the word for “back” or “shoulder” - an apt description of Shechem's location in the narrow valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal approximately 65 km North of [Jerusalem \(see Map 1\)](#). It was strategically located controlling major North-South and East-West roads, but lacked natural defenses and for that reason required heavy fortification. In addition to Jacob's Well (400m to the South East) it is thought that the city derived its water supply via a conduit from a cave in Mt. Gerizim (Wright, 1965: 214-228), while the fertile plain of 'Askar provided the city with food (Toombs, 1992: 1174-1175).

**Map 1:** Location Map of Shechem.



## 2 Archaeological Expeditions to Shechem

Until 1903 the exact location of Shechem had been uncertain. The Jewish writer [Josephus](#) writing about AD 90 placed the city between Mts. Gerizim and Ebal (*Antiquities*, 4.8.44). Later the church historian Eusebius (c. 260 - c. 340 AD) and a pilgrim from Bordeaux (333 AD) placed it on the outskirts of Neapolis (modern [Nablus](#)) near Jacob's Well. Jerome (345-420 AD) repeated Eusebius' location, but elsewhere made it



clear that he doubted that Shechem was anything other than the predecessor of Neapolis. Modern scholarship followed Jerome until 1903 when a party of German scholars led by Prof. Hermann Thiersh quite by accident discovered the ruins of Shechem. Eusebius had been quite accurate: the site of Shechem, known as Tell Balatah was located East of Nablus beside the traditional site for the [tomb of Joseph](#) (Josh. 24:32) and near Jacob's Well (John 4:5-6) (Wright, 1967: 355).

Wishing to keep the excavation in German hands Thiersh did not make his discovery public and it was 1913 before the biblical scholar Ernst Sellin led the first expedition to begin excavation. Following the 1913-14 campaign the work was interrupted by the outbreak of war and it was 1928 before work recommenced, with further digs in 1932 and 1934. The results of these expeditions were often inadequately mapped and recorded and the interpretation of the finds is dubious. Although their work produced much useful data poor methodology and fieldwork as well as personal rivalry complicated later digs (Moorey, 1991: 64). In 1954 the American Drew-McCormick Expedition under George Ernest Wright started work on the site and continued in 1956-57, 1960 and 1962. The results of this work will be referred to below.

### 3 The History of Shechem

Shechem's strategic location and plentiful supplies of both food and water explain why it was occupied for thousands of years. The city is referred to many times both in biblical and extrabiblical records. These together with the extensive archaeological work that has been carried out enable us to trace with a fair degree of certainty the history of the city.

**3.1 Before the Patriarchs.** It is likely that Shechem was one of the oldest settlements in [Canaan](#). The earliest written record comes from an inscription on the Stele of Khu-Sebek who was a noble in the court of Sesotris III (c. 1880-1840 BC). It reads: "his majesty reached a foreign country of which the name was *skmm* [Shechem]. Then *skmm* fell, together with the wretched *Retunu* [an Egyptian name for the inhabitants of Syro-Palestine]." An Egyptian execration text (a clay tablet on which curses are inscribed and then ceremonially broken) dating from the mid nineteenth century refers to one Ibish-hadad of Shechem, indicating that Shechem was an important centre of resistance against Egyptian rule (Toombs, 1992: 1179).

### 3.2 The days of the Patriarchs.

**3.2.1 Abraham.** The first reference to Shechem in Scripture occurs in [Genesis 12:6-8](#). This passage records how [Abram](#) travelled southwards through Canaan until he reached the great tree of Moreh at Shechem in the centre of the land. There the Lord appeared to him and in response he build an altar and offered sacrifices to the Lord. The oak or *terebinth* of Moreh was to feature significantly later in the [Old Testament](#), but it is important to note that although the location may well have been a place of Canaanite worship Abram did not associate himself with that worship (Hamilton, 1990: 377).

**3.2.2 Jacob.** On his return from Paddam Aram Jacob settled for a time within sight of the city of Shechem and bought the second plot of land in [Canaan](#) (33:18-20; cf. 23:1-20). There [Jacob](#) set up an altar to [God](#), the God of Israel (*El Elohe Israel*). While he and his family were encamped near the city, the son of one its leading citizens, Shechem son of Hamor, took Jacob's daughter Dinah and raped her. Having found her to his liking he then persuaded his father to obtain Jacob's consent to marry Dinah. Jacob's son's tricked Hamor into disabling all the men of the city by persuading them to be circumcised themselves on the pretence of removing a ceremonial obstacle to intermarriage. Simeon and Levi pressed home the advantage they had gained by putting the city to the sword and rescued Dinah, who was apparently being held in Shechem's house (34:1-31).

Jacob was troubled by the slaughter and feared for the lives of his family when the Canaanites heard about what had taken place. Having been commanded by the Lord to move to Bethel he purified his camp of all the foreign gods and buried them under the *terebinth* (35:1-5).

### 3.3 Conquest to Monarchy

**3.2.1 Tribal allotment.** Shechem was part of the tribal territory of Manasseh ([Josh. 17:7](#)). It was also both a city of refuge (20:7) and a Levite city, set aside for the Kohathite clan (21:20-21).

**3.3.2 Covenant Renewals at Shechem.** The book of Joshua records two covenant renewals carried out by Joshua (8:30-35; 24:1-27; cf. [Deut. 27:11-13](#)). Although the first does not mention Shechem by name, it is clearly implied by its location between the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. There is no evidence either from scripture or archaeology that the Israelites conquered the city by force (Toombs, 1992; 1183-1184). This

fact has served to fuel a number of the recent theories of Israel's origins ([see 4 below](#)), but does not mean that the original Canaanite inhabitants remained there during the conquest. It seems far more likely that the city was captured without a fight and that it was inhabited by Israelites. At the conclusion of the ceremony Joshua "...took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord" (Josh. 24:26 *NIV*), almost certainly outside the city were both [Abraham](#) and [Jacob](#) had sacrificed ([3.2.1](#), [3.2.2](#)).

**3.3.3 Joseph's Place of Burial.** While he was in Egypt [Joseph](#) gave specific instructions regarding the arrangements for his burial (Gen. 50:24-26). Joseph's bones were removed from Egypt at the Exodus (Exod. 13:19) and buried in the tract of land that Jacob had bought (Josh. 24:32).

**3.3.4 Abimelech & the Kingship.** Following the death of Gideon Abimelech, the son of his Shechemite concubine ([Judges 8:31](#)) claimed the kingship that his father had refused (9:1-3; cf. 8:22-23). Having persuaded the citizens of Shechem to follow him he set about murdering all but one of his brothers (9:3-7). Jotham, the only surviving son of Gideon addressed the citizens of Shechem by way of a prophetic parable which foretold their destruction by fire (9:7-21). After three years the people of Shechem decided that they had had enough of Abimelech's rule and attempted to make Gaal son of Ebed their leader (9:22-30). Abimelech learnt of Gaal's rebellion and attacked the city from the plain to the east as the people were going out to work in the fields (9:31-45). Once the city had fallen Abimelech turned his attention to the stronghold of the temple of Ba'al berith, where about a thousand of the city's inhabitants had taken refuge. Rather than lay siege he set fire to the tower, killing the remaining citizens of the city (9:46-49). Abimelech himself was slain shortly afterwards attempting to repeat this procedure in the nearby city of Thebez (9:50-55).

### 3.4 Monarch to Exile

**3.4.1 David's Laments.** Shechem is mentioned by [David](#) in two national laments attributed to him ([Psalm 60:6-8](#)=[108:7-9](#)). The verses cited remind the audience that it is the Lord who has measured and given the land; the people are only his tenants. He is also sovereign over the nations.

**3.4.2 Jereboam's Capital.** Following the death of [Solomon](#) all Israel was summoned to Shechem to make Rehoboam his son king, probably because of its historic associations. Rehoboam's foolishness resulted in the

division of the kingdom with Jereboam son of Nebat ruling the ten northern [tribes](#) ([2 Kings 12:1-17](#); [2 Chron. 10:1-17](#)). Jeroboam initially chose Shechem as his new capital and fortified it against attacks from the South ([1 Kings 12:25](#)). The archaeological evidence for these fortifications is confused, but they appear to have taken the form of casemate walls (Toombs, 1992: 1184). The city lost much of its prestige when Jereboam moved his capital first to Peniel in the Transjordan (12:25) and then to Tirzah about seven miles to the North of Shechem (14:17) ([see Map 1](#)).

Hosea refers to the depths the Northern Kingdom had descended to in graphic language when he speaks of bands of priests who murder those on the road to Shechem (6:9). Such activity was not unknown in the days before the monarchy (cf. [Judges 9:25](#)) and was facilitated by the narrow ravines through which the city was approached (Toombs, 1992: 1175). Shechem was a city of refuge and as such was supposed to be a place of safety. Ironically the situation in the land had degenerated so far that those fleeing the avenger of blood were in danger from the very people who were meant to protect them.

**3.4.3 Destruction.** Archaeological evidence suggests a destruction of the city during the reign of Menahem ([2 Kings 15:13-16](#)). In 724 the city fell again to the [Assyrians](#) and was reduced to a heap of ruins along with all the other cities of the Northern Kingdom (Toombs, 1992: 1185).

**3.5 After the Exile.** Shechem was all but abandoned after its fall to the Assyrians. That there were still some Israelites living there is evidenced by Jeremiah's account of the ill-fated delegation from that city (41:4-7). After this time the city shows no sign of occupation for about 150 years.

**3.5.1 A Samaritan City.** The Assyrians settled exiled peoples from other nations in the Northern Kingdom. According to 2 Kings these peoples were taught how to worship the Lord in order to bring prevent attacks by lions, seen as divine judgement. However, the people simply added the worship of Yahweh to their own beliefs and worshipped both ([2 Kings 17:24-34](#)). During the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem the Samaritans sent messengers offering their help so that they might take part in the temple worship. The sharp rebuff they received led them to fiercely oppose the reconstruction and a long lasting hostility between the two peoples ([Ezra 4:1-3](#); cf. [Luke 9:52-53](#); [John 4:9](#)).

When [Alexander the Great](#) defeated the [Persians](#) he was initially supported by the Samaritans, who put 8 000 troops at his disposal in his campaign against Egypt. When Alexander left they attempted to free themselves from his rule:

While Alexander was in Egypt, the Samaritans in Samaria revolted and killed the newly appointed governor, Andromachus. In retaliation Alexander destroyed the city of Samaria and established a garrison of 600 troops there. Many of the Samaritans fled to the foot of Mt. Gerizim and, with Alexander's permission, built a temple to rival the [Jewish temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#) (Anderson, 1988:303-304).

In 128 BC the Jewish leader John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC) levelled the temple on Mount Gerezim, adding to the long hatred between the two peoples. In 107 BC he captured Samaria and it is thought that the final destruction of Shechem also took place at this time. The defensive walls were buried so that they could no longer be used. The surviving population relocated to the nearby towns of Sychar and Neapolis (Anderson, 1988: 304; Wright, 1965: 183-184).

**3.6 Shechem in the New Testament.** The city of Shechem no longer existed in the time of [Jesus](#), but it was referred to as a historic location.

**3.6.1 Stephen's Speech.** Stephen's speech as recorded by Luke in Acts 7:2-53 provides a review of the history of Israel from the time of [Abraham](#). Verse 16 and its reference to Shechem has proved particularly difficult to explain. The problem arises because it apparently contradicts the text of Genesis by stating that Abraham, rather than Jacob bought the plot of land at Shechem from the sons of Hamor ([Gen. 33:18-19](#); cf. 23:3-20). Commentators have suggested a number of explanations for this: a) Abraham was the original purchaser of the field and Jacob merely renewed the transaction as he did with the well Abraham's servants had dug ([Gen. 21:27-30](#); [26:28-31](#)) (Archer, 1982: 379-380). This solution relies on an argument from silence as Genesis makes no mention of any land purchase at Shechem by Abraham. More importantly there is no reference to a tomb on the plot that Jacob bought. b) Jacob bought the site in Abraham's name, so in effect Abraham bought the land (Stott, 1990: 134). c) Luke records Stephen's speech accurately, a speech that contains a number of generalisations and conflation after the manner of popular Judaism of the period. Four similar difficulties of the same sort occur in verses 2-8 of the same chapter, indicating that Stephen was not intending



to be absolutely accurate in the details he presented (Longenecker, 1981: 340-341). This seems to be the best explanation of the passage.

## 4 Shechem in Theological Discussion

The city of Shechem and its environs has formed an important theme in many of the reconstructions of Israel's history produced this century. The theories differ widely, but all are sceptical of the accuracy of the [Old Testament](#) account as it has come down to us.

**4.1 W.O.E. Oesterley & T.H. Robinson.** Oesterley & Robinson, in common with many other liberal scholars this century, saw the patriarchal narratives as describing an animistic religion. Discussing Gen. 12:6-8 they point out that 'the Oak of Moreh' should be translated 'terebinth of the teacher', which, according to them, meant that it was a tree at which divine teaching was given.

The tree was regarded as sacred. Abraham halts at it because he expects a divine manifestation there; and he is not disappointed... there is no room for doubt that we have here an instance of the development of the belief that spirits took up their abode in trees (Oesterley & Robinson, 1935: 22).

When [Gen. 35:4](#) describes [Jacob](#) burying the 'foreign gods' and ear-rings under the Shechem *terebinth*, Oesterley & Robinson see this as further evidence of the worship of trees. By burying the 'gods' under the oak they were placed under the power of the tree sanctuary of Jacob's God and thus rendered harmless (Oesterley & Robinson, 1935: 23). They also find evidence of animism in Gen. 35:8, where they link the name 'Oak of weeping', with the Canaanite practice of weeping for Tammuz (cf. [Ezek.8:14](#)) (Oesterley & Robinson, 1935: 23-24).

On [Genesis 12:6-8](#) it should be noted that the oak or *terebinth* was a spreading tree much valued for its shade. In the same way shade trees (for example the *Pipal* tree in Nepal and the *Banyan* in India) are places of meeting or markets. It is therefore not surprising that Abraham chose this place to make his camp under one, or that Jacob found one a convenient spot for burying idols and ear-rings (35:4). Further evidence for this point can be seen in the fact that in other instances God appeared to Abraham in places unconnected with trees (Harrison, 1970: 386).



**4.2 Martin Noth (1902-1968).** The city of Shechem plays an important role in Noth's major work *The History of Israel*. Noth rejected the biblical account of the conquest and argued instead that Israel's occupation of the land took place through a gradual process of infiltration (Noth, 1996: 68-74). Noth suggested that the amphictyonies of Greece and Italy provided a model for understanding the emergence of Israel in Canaan. He noticed that these cultures provided examples of groups of tribes gathered around a central shrine and united by the worship of a common deity - an organisation known as an amphictyony (Noth, 1996: 87-88). From this loose association a more structured political union could develop. The shrine near Shechem was identified as the probable location of the Israelite's first central shrine (Noth, 1996: 91-93).

Noth's proposal deeply influenced the study of Joshua and Judges for many years, but has now been largely abandoned because it demanded that the structure of Greek and Italian amphictyonies be read into the text and not out of them. In addition Noth's theory that these amphictyonies developed into political structures has also been shown to be seriously flawed (Chambers, 1983: 44-48; Gottwald, 1979: 376-386).

**4.3 Norman K. Gottwald.** Gottwald held that Israel emerged from within the population of Canaan and not by invasion from outside of it. Shechem was viewed as a neutral [Canaanite](#) city which worshipped Ba'al-berith and not Yahweh. (Gottwald, 1979: 563-564). Ba'al-berith was worshipped at a sacred site inside the city and Yahweh at a tree outside the city ([Gen. 12:6](#); [33:18b-20](#); [35:4](#); [Deut. 11:30](#); [Josh. 24:26](#); [Judges 9:6](#), 37). This would explain the continued existence of a temple to Ba'al-berith in Shechem (Judges 9:4) which does not require the reintroduction of a Canaanite cult (Gottwald, 1979: 564). Joshua's speech (Josh 24) is therefore seen as institution of Yahwism and not as a renewal of a pre-existing covenant. The Shechemites were among those who declined the adoption of the new faith (Gottwald, 1979: 567).

An important part of Gottwald's argument for the separation of the sites of worship is the absence of a sacred pillar inside the city of Shechem. However, archaeology has demonstrated that during the period 1450-1100 BC there was a standing stone inside the temple precinct in Shechem. Further, Gottwald ignores the reference to the temple of El-berith in [Judges 9:46](#). It is far more likely that the name indicates the syncretistic worship that Israel had descended to (cf. [Judges 8:33-35](#)) rather than the existence of a separate Canaanite enclave (Campbell, 1983: 264-265).

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## The Synagogue at Capernaum

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*"They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach." ([Mark](#) 1:21)*

The ruins of a great [synagogue](#) were first identified in 1866 during a survey by the British cartographer Captain Charles W. Wilson. Partially reconstructed in 1926, the dating of the [Capernaum](#) synagogue continues to be a matter of debate.

What is certain is that the imposing ruin is not the synagogue referred to in the Gospel of Mark, though it seems to have been built on the site of an earlier 1st-century building.

Built of imported white limestone on basalt stone foundations, the floor plan is similar to the 4th-century synagogue at Chorazim (Korazim, 4 km to the north), and the 3rd-century synagogue at Bar'am (in the northern Galilee), but the architectural ornamentation of the Capernaum building is far more elaborate, with Corinthian capitals and intricately carved stonework reliefs (vine and fig leaves, geometric designs, eagles, etc.). One relief carving of a cart may depict a portable Ark of the Covenant. Visitors are sometimes disconcerted by the fact that the architectural decoration also includes swastikas; but this was a common geometrical design of the period.

A 4th-century Aramaic inscription on one of the broken columns records the name of the donor, "Halfu, son of

Zebida". These names in the Greek form (Alphaeus and Zebedee) are mentioned in the New Testament.

The synagogue as it appeared in 381 was described by the Spanish pilgrim, the Lady Egeria, who reported that the way into the structure was up many steps, and that the building was made of dressed stone.

The very grandeur of the Capernaum synagogue has contributed to the controversy concerning the actual dating of the building. Various theories have been proposed. Evidence for a 4th-century date is based in part on coins and pottery found beneath the floor. Proponents of an earlier 2nd-century date say these may have been left during later repairs and reconstruction, possibly following the earthquake of 363. Another possibility is that the synagogue was built during the short reign (361-363) of the Emperor Julian "the Apostate", which would also correspond with the date of the earthquake.

The synagogue and the church at Capernaum were both destroyed in the early 7th century (sometime before the Arab conquest in 636). In light of the continuing tensions between the Christian and Jewish communities, it has been suggested that the church may have been destroyed during the Persian invasion of 614, and that the synagogue was destroyed 15 years later as an act of retaliation during the brief re-establishment of [Byzantine](#) rule. If so, it is appropriate that one of the first instances of modern "inter-faith dialogue" between Christians and Jews took place in nearby [Tiberias](#) in 1942, in a series of discussions between the Rev. George L. B. Sloan, a minister of the Church of Scotland in Tiberias, and the Jewish writer and lecturer Dr. Shalom Ben-Chorin.

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### Tabgha: Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes

Christians of the early [Byzantine](#) period built monasteries, churches and shrines in Galilee and on the shores of the Sea of Galilee to commemorate the ministry of Jesus and the miracles ascribed to him. Tabgha – an Arabic corruption of the Greek name Heptapegon (Seven Springs) – is the traditional site of the Miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes. ([Matt.](#) 14: 13-21) It is situated in a narrow, fertile valley on the northern shore of the lake, watered by several springs.

The earliest building at Tabgha was a small chapel (18 x 9.6 m) from the 4th century CE; only a part of its foundations was uncovered. This was probably the shrine described by the pilgrim Egeria at the end of the 4th century:

*In the same place (not far from Capernaum) facing the Sea of Galilee is a well watered land in which lush grasses grow, with numerous trees and palms. Nearby are seven springs which provide abundant water. In this fruitful garden Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. The stone upon which the Master placed the bread became an altar. The many pilgrims to the site broke off pieces of it as a cure for their ailments.*

During the fifth century, a large monastery and a church decorated with exquisite mosaic floors was built on the site. The complex covered an area of 56 x 33 m. and included courtyards and many rooms used as workshops for a variety of crafts as well as for lodging for the monks and the many



pilgrims who came to visit.

The monastery and church at Tabgha were destroyed in the 7th century, probably during the Arab conquest of the country, and buried beneath a thick layer of silt and stones. In the 1980s, after excavation, the church was restored to its Byzantine form, incorporating portions of the original mosaics.



The basilical church is divided by two rows of columns into a central hall and two aisles. In the eastern wall is a semi-circular apse and on either side of it, rooms for the officiating clergy. A raised platform in front of the apse is surrounded by a chancel screen and at its center an untrimmed stone was preserved under the altar. This is the traditional site of the miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes. A mosaic depicting a basket of bread flanked by two fish was found behind the untrimmed stone. It was added in the 6th century, suggesting the stone's significance; today it is displayed in front of the altar.

The church is famous for its mosaics, unique among Byzantine churches in the Holy Land. Most of the floor of the church is decorated in ordinary geometric patterns. The unique principal mosaics decorate both sides of the transept. Particularly well preserved is the one on the left of the platform, a square carpet (6.5 x 5.5 m.) bordered with a band of lotus flowers.

The carpets are decorated with multi-colored representations of the local flora and fauna, interspersed with several buildings. The flowers and animals, mainly birds, are so naturalistically depicted that it is possible to identify lotus, oleander and lily; also duck, snipe, heron, goose, dove, swan, cormorant, flamingo and stork. A tower marked with bands bearing Greek letters, probably for measuring the water level of the Sea of Galilee

(known as a "nilometer"), is also depicted.

The church belongs to the Order of the Benedictines and is open to visitors. Today, as in Byzantine times, large numbers of pilgrims come to visit.

In 1968 excavations were carried out by B. Bagatti and S. Loffreda on behalf of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. The 1979-1980 excavations were conducted by R. Rosenthal and M. HersHKovitz on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (today, the Israel Antiquities Authority), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem

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## Tel Dor

Throughout Biblical times, from the days of Solomon to the reign of Herod the Great, the harbor at Dor acted as a magnet, drawing commerce and conquerors to the Carmel coast. One of the few natural harbors on Israel's Mediterranean coast, Dor today is one of the country's largest archaeological sites and an important key to understanding the sequence of occupation during Biblical and later times.

The coastal district of north central Israel, where Dor is located, is an attractive area. To the north of Pardes Hanna lie the Carmel range and the famed Carmel caves (where the excavation of settlements dating back to the Paleolithic Era has been in progress for over half a century). To the south stand the dramatic ruins of Caesarea, the formidable seaport constructed by Herod the Great. Numerous other sites of interest, such as Megiddo, also lie nearby, and Tel Aviv is only 50 kilometers away.

Originally a Canaanite city, later ruled by a group of the Sea Peoples, Dor was conquered by David and became one of the 12 district capitals of Solomon, and his main port on the Mediterranean. In 732 B.C., Dor fell to the Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III, but was at once made the capital of the Assyrian coastal province of Duru. The town also prospered under the Achaemenid Persians, at a time when both Greeks and Phoenicians also lived within the walled circuit of the city. In [Hellenistic](#) times Dora, as it was then called, became an important fortress, which later (under [Roman rule](#)), was still of sufficient size and importance to issue its own coinage. A Jewish community is known to have existed at Dor in the mid-first century A.D. and, despite the town's undoubted decline in the [Byzantine](#) period, it was still the seat of a bishopric from the fifth to the seventh centuries A.D. In the thirteenth century A.D. a [Crusader](#) castle was built on the site.

For a site of unusual historical and archaeological appeal, Dor has received surprisingly little attention from archaeologists. Apart from limited excavations conducted by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem some sixty-five years ago, Dor only began to be examined in earnest in 1980 when the Hebrew University of Jerusalem launched the program of excavations which the U.C. team joined during the 1985 field season.



The team's work at Dor focuses on the ancient citadel and its approaches (Area D1) and the Roman temples (Areas F and H). Previous work at Tel Dor has already revealed the huge stone gate of Solomon's city, cylinder seals from Assyrian times, numerous terracotta figurines from the Persian occupation, well preserved stone-walled houses from the Hellenistic period, and mosaic floors dating to Roman times.

While in the short term the excavations at Tel Dor are designed to reveal past patterns of social and economic life at Dor itself, the long range goal is to contribute to a regional study of adjacent parts of the Sharon Plain, and in particular, of the Carmel coast.

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Source: UC Berkeley and Santa Barbara [Tel Dor Archaeological Expedition](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Archaeology/Tel_Dor.html)



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## Tell en-Nabeh

by Jeffrey Zorn

Tell en-Nabeh, located 12 km north of [Jerusalem](#) on the southern outskirts of Ramallah, is identified with Biblical Mizpah of Benjamin (contra claims for [Nebi Samwil](#) where the archaeological remains do not match the historical data on the site). Approximately 75% of the site was excavated between 1926 and 1935 by William F. Badè of what is now Pacific School of Religion, making it the most broadly excavated settlement in ancient Israel.

The earliest occupation on the tell (Stratum 5) dates to the Early Bronze I period, ca. 3100 BC. For the most part this is limited to a handful of cave tombs and their contents. However, the northwest corner of the site contained relatively high concentrations of EB I pottery, suggesting that any dwellings were located there.

After a gap in occupation of almost 2000 years Tell en-Nabeh was preoccupied during the Iron I period, sometime between 1200-1100 BC. The structures associated with this Stratum 4 have largely disappeared. Such architecture as does survive is limited to subterranean features such as silos and some cisterns. Below ground storage facilities at many Iron I sites are one of the hall marks of the Israelite settlement process. Nabeh also produced collar rim storage jars and cooking pots typical of this era. Mizpah was the center of several confrontations with the [Philistines](#) ([1 Samuel 7:5ff](#)), so it is perhaps not surprising to find Philistine bi-chrome pottery there. What is interesting, however, is that this Philistine pottery was made from local clays. Either a Philistine potter was working in the



area, or the Israelites were copying this pottery for themselves.

Stratum 3 is a typical Iron II (ca. 950-586 BC) hill country town covering 2.4 ha. The houses are arranged in concentric bands around the site, in a step like fashion which makes use of the natural terracing of the hill. At least one road, probably two in places, provide access around the interior of the town, supplemented by occasional cross roads. Most houses are of the three room variety; that is, two long rooms, with a single room across the back. Average size for such structures was ca. 65m<sup>2</sup>. The site contained about 200 dwellings, suggesting a population of 800-1000.

Initially, in Stratum 3C (ca. 950 BC), the town had very limited fortifications, only the back rooms/walls of the houses around the perimeter of the town provided any form of defense. In Stratum 3B a massive fortification system was added just down slope of this town. This consisted of a wall averaging 4.5 m thick built in an inset-offset fashion. Large towers, often over 6.5 m thick, are located along the length of the wall. In particularly important places stone revetments and moats were added, giving this relatively small settlement defenses 14+ m across! An inner and outer gate system 70 m long and at least 30 m wide secured entry to the town. These defenses were no doubt added by King Asa of Judah in the early 9th c. to turn Mizpah into his northern bastion against attacks from the Kingdom of Israel ([1 Kings 15:22](#)). The importance of Nabeh as a northern fortress is also attested by the 86 royal LMLK stamps recovered; evidence of King Hezekiah's efforts to prepare for the Assyrian invasion of 701 B.C.

Olive and grape presses were found either in the town, or immediately outside and provide information on some of the agricultural practices carried out at Tell en-Nabeh. The site also yielded a rich collection of artifactual remains, such as fertility figurines, bronze and iron utensils, ostraca, jewelry, weights and more. A small cemetery of Iron Age bench tombs was located just beyond the town limits, mainly to the west and north, providing information on Judahite burial practices.

Stratum 3 was systematically dismantled and leveled to make room for a completely new architectural arrangement in Stratum 2, which belongs to the [Babylonian-Persian](#) periods and dates ca. 586-400 BC. The outer gate was also demolished to make room for additional housing. This is the zenith of Nabeh's development and corresponds well with the Biblical stories involving Mizpah in Jeremiah 40-41. The site contained at least six spacious four room house, almost double the size of the Stratum 3

dwellings. Not only are these structures larger, but they are better constructed than their predecessors. Important wall junctions contain stones of near ashlar quality, pillars are expertly crafted monoliths, more stone paved floors are in evidence. Most likely these are the homes of important officials in the administration of Gedaliah, the Judahite placed in charged of the ruined kingdom of Judah after the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Other large buildings dot the site. In the north central area was a spacious courtyard structure reminiscent of Mesopotamian style residences. A cluster of fragmentary walls and rooms in the southwest part of the site indicates the probable existence of storage and administrative facilities. West of the old inner gate was found a long stretch of wall which seems to mark an enclosure for unexcavated structures farther west. All of these structures are far larger than anything from Stratum 3 and are laid out with no consideration or reuse of the earlier buildings. The population probably numbered between 400-500 individuals.

Artifactual remains are especially significant and add greatly to our understanding of [Judah](#) in the dark years following the Babylonian attack. Stamp impressions reading M(W)H signify resources probably sent from a royal estate at Mozah, just west of [Jerusalem](#). Fortythree such impressions are known from an area roughly corresponding to the area of the tribe of Benjamin, a narrow strip of territory running just north of Jerusalem. Thirty of these impressions come from Nabeh. This shows not only that Nabeh was the key site in the distribution of jars stamped in this way, but also suggests the limited area Gedaliah could draw on for resources. One of the most striking artifacts is the seal of "Ja'azaniah, the Servant of the King." This seal is decorated with a rooster in a fighting stance and may belong to the very Ja'azaniah who was one of the officers who joined Gedaliah at Mizpah (2 Kings 25:23 and Jeremiah 40:8)

Objects connected with the Babylonian presence were also recovered. First are fragments of three Mesopotamian bath tub shape clay coffins. A bronze beaker, common in Mesopotamian burials, was found in the vicinity of one of the coffin fragments and possibly came from it originally. Next is a slender fragment of a bronze circlet bearing a dedicatory inscription in Babylonian cuneiform. An ostrakon bearing a Babylonian name incised in Hebrew characters was found in a cistern. Finally, four so-called Skythian arrowheads may indicate the presence of Babylonian soldiers.

Storage jars and deep bowls decorated with impressed wedges and circles are very abundant at Tell en-Nabeh. Similar vessels are known primarily from the area of Judah. Some examples are also now known from [Jordan](#) and north Arabia, perhaps suggesting commerce across this region. [Greek](#) pottery dating to the mid 6th to late 5th century BC was also found. These two groups of ceramics probably indicate the gradual revival of foreign trade in Judah as conditions gradually improved through the 6th c. Eighteen Yehud impressions attest to Mizpah's importance down into the Persian period, as suggested by Nehemiah 3.

Stratum 1 is mixed material from several periods. Among the finds are a watch tower, grape press and pottery kilns which may be evidence for an agricultural estate at Mizpah in the Hellenistic-Roman periods. This may tie in with the brief reference to Mizpah in 1 Maccabees 3:46.

All in all the material remains from Tell en-Nabeh are an extremely nice fit with the Biblical records pertaining to Mizpah of Benjamin.

*Zorn is Visiting Assistant Professor of Biblical History and Archaeology at Cornell.*

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Source: Prof. Zorn.

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## Tel Qasile

by [Hillel Geva](#)

Tel Qasile lies within the city limits of [Tel Aviv](#), at the mouth of the Yarkon River. In antiquity, the river at the foot of the tel (mound) served as an inner harbor, protected from the waves of the Mediterranean Sea. The settlement itself was on a kurkar (a kind of sandstone) hill on the northern bank of the river and, in its heyday, covered some four acres.

The first excavations at Tel Qasile were conducted from 1948 to 1950. Excavations were renewed between 1971 and 1974. The most significant remains include a [Philistine](#) residential quarter with a sacred area, dated to the beginning of the Iron Age (12th - 10th century BCE). The excavations provided evidence of continued settlement through the 10th century, when the area came under the control of the kings of Israel. Remains of settlement from the end of the Iron Age to the Early Arab period were also found.

### The Residential Quarter

Excavations in the southern part of the tel revealed three distinct Philistine settlement strata dating to the beginning of the Iron Age.

Buildings of the lower Stratum (XII) were constructed directly on the kurkar ridge of the hill. Meagre remains from this stratum include depressions cut into the rock and some segments of walls and pavements. The first town, of Stratum XI, was surrounded by a strong brick wall, ca. 5 m. thick, remains of which were found on the western side of the tel. Next

to a large building made of kurkar stones was a plaza, where two clay crucibles for melting copper were found.

In Stratum X, dwellings were found throughout the excavated area, surrounded by streets. The houses were built next to one another in a line, and access to them was from the street only. They consisted of a side courtyard with two long rooms along its two sides. In some instances, a row of columns was placed in the courtyard, evidence that it was partly roofed. The rooms were used for living, working and storage, and the varied assemblages of Philistine, Canaanite, and Israelite pottery attest to the composition of the population in the 11th century BCE, where for the first time, iron implements came into use. This settlement was destroyed in a great conflagration.

## **The Philistine Cult Center**

On the eastern side of the tel a Philistine cult center was exposed, consisting of a series of temples constructed one upon the other, thus preserving the tradition of the sanctity of the place for some 200 years. The temples were built according to a common plan, and with the same construction techniques.

The remains of the Philistine temples uncovered at Tel Qasile are of exceptional importance for the study of temple architecture and the Philistine cult at the end of the second millennium BCE. For the first time it is possible to observe the architectural and cultic connections between the Philistine and Canaanite temples here, and those in the Philistines' lands of origin - mainland Greece, Cyprus and the Aegean islands. But the identity of the deity to whom the temple at Tel Qasile was dedicated could not be established.

## **The First Temple, Stratum XII**

### *Temple excavation*

The first of the series of temples was found in Stratum XII. It was a small temple, consisting of a single room (6.6 x 6.4 m.) built of mudbrick with plaster-covered walls. The entrance to the building was in the center of the eastern wall and benches built of brick stood along some of the walls. Inside the room, opposite the entrance, was an elevated platform (bema) built of plastered brick. The cell behind it perhaps served as a repository for cultic objects. A broad courtyard, where remains of ash and bones



from sacrifices were found, extended east and north of the temple.

Southeast of this courtyard was a public building with several rooms and a large hall with benches along its walls. In the hall was a raised, elliptical brick hearth, covered with potsherds and with a depression to contain the fire. Aegean parallels for this type of installation attest to the cultural origin of the Philistines who lived at Tel Qasile. The public building was clearly part of the Philistine administrative center. The pottery vessels found in this stratum are white-slipped with typically Philistine decoration.

## **The Second Temple, Stratum XI**

This temple was built on the ruins of its predecessor. Its area was enlarged to 8.5 x 7.7 m., and its 1 m.-thick walls were built of kurkar stones. The entrance was in the eastern wall. This structure consisted of a single room with built benches along its walls. The southwestern corner was separated by brick walls, creating a small room (2.8 x 1.5 m.), in which a variety of objects were found: primarily pottery vessels, but also a mask with a human face, a small duck-shaped ivory box and a pyramid-shaped shell that was probably used as a horn. In this stratum too, a broad courtyard extended north and east of the temple, in which a burial pit for cultic vessels (*favissae*) was found. Many of these were decorated with red and black Philistine motifs but there were also fragments of zoomorphic masks and a unique female-shaped vessel with breasts that were spouts for pouring liquid.

A smaller temple (5.6 x 3.5 m.) was found west of this temple. Along the brick walls were benches and at the far end, opposite the entrance, was a small bema with two steps, built of plastered bricks. Leaning against the bema were three high ritual stands made of pottery: a cylindrical base painted in red with black designs, with perforated "windows", and on top a bowl with a bird's head.

The public building south of the temple remained in use and another large building was erected next to it. In this stratum the pottery was typically Philistine, red-slipped with black decoration.

## **The Third Temple, Stratum X**

During this phase, the temple was enlarged (14.5x8 m.) incorporating the walls of the previous temple. The entrance was now on the northern side of the entrance room and a wide opening connected it with the main hall



(heikhal) of the temple. Here, two columns (of Cedar of Lebanon), resting on stone bases, supported the roof. Along the walls was a double row of plastered benches. A partition wall created a small storage room along the western wall of the temple; against the partition wall stood a 90 cm.-high brick bema with two steps on each side.

A wealth of artifacts was found near the bema and in the storage room of this temple, which was destroyed by fire. They include: a clay plaque in the form of a temple façade, with a pair of figures at the entrance; a cylindrical cultic stand perforated with windows; a cylindrical cultic stand on which a pair of lionesses support a bowl; and another cylindrical cultic stand decorated with a bird. Several libation vessels of pottery are of unique form: a kernos - a hollow ring-shaped vessel with figures atop it; a vessel shaped like a cluster of fruit; a zoomorphic vessel in the form of a hippopotamus; and two pomegranate-shaped vessels.

Northeast of the temple was a courtyard enclosed by a stone wall. In this stratum too, a room was located at the northern edge of the courtyard, and opposite the entrance to the temple a square foundation was uncovered, apparently that of a sacrificial altar.

North and west of the temple was yet another walled courtyard, with an opening towards the street going north. In a small room in the northern corner of this courtyard cooking facilities were uncovered, indicating that this was the kitchen of the temple complex. The small temple of the previous stratum, located west of the temple, continued to be used during this phase.

South of the temple complex, part of a residential quarter built on the public building of the previous stratum was exposed. One of the dwellings, which was completely uncovered, measures 13.5 x 8.5 m. and is indicative of the type of dwelling at Tel Qasile during this period. It had a large courtyard with a row of five wooden columns on stone bases at its center, so that part of the courtyard was roofed while the rest was probably left unroofed. Of two square rooms built at the side of the courtyard, one was obviously used as a storeroom, as 80 ceramic storage jars were found in it; in the other room, household utensils were found.

## **The Period of the Kings of Israel**

The coastal region was annexed to the [Kingdom of Israel](#) during the reign of [King Solomon](#). A public building (14 x 12 m.), probably the regional

administrative center, was built in the southern part of Tel Qasile. It included an entrance hall, several rooms south of it, and a staircase leading to a second story. This town was destroyed in the campaign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak (924 BCE) and the tel was abandoned until the end of the Iron Age.

An ostrakon with the ancient Hebrew inscription "Ophir gold to Beth Horon, 30 shekels" was found on the tel. This is a commercial document dealing with a shipment of 30 shekels of Ophir gold (fine quality gold or gold from a place called Ophir (see I Kings 9:28) to the town of Beth Horon (on the road from Tel Qasile to Jerusalem) or to an unknown temple dedicated to the Canaanite God Horon.

Recent excavations were conducted under the direction of A. Mazar on behalf of the Land of Israel Museum, Tel Aviv, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Exploration Society

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Tel Shilo

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The city of [Shilo](#) held a central place in the history of the Jewish people. During the period between capturing the Land and building the [Temple](#), thousands of years ago in the days when [Joshua](#) divided the land among the [12 tribes](#), the Tabernacle resided in Shilo.

The location of the city was important, and until the death of Eli the High Priest, whose tomb is marked in Shilo, Shilo was the place of pilgrimage for the Children of Israel. Three times a year the faithful sojourned in Shilo to bring their festival offerings.

Tel Shilo is an archeological site, located in the Ephraim hills of the Shomron where the spiritual life of the Jewish people was centered for 369 years in the 11th and 12th centuries [B.C.E.](#) In addition, there are artifacts from other periods, notably the end of the [Second Temple](#) (130 B. C.E. - 70 B.C.E.), the [Byzantine period](#) (350 -618), and the early [Muslim period](#) (638-900).

### General Description

The first archeological excavations began in the years 1922-1932 by a Danish expedition. The finds were placed in the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen.

In 1980, Yisrael Finkelstein, an archeologist from Bar-Ilan University, initiated four seasons of digs and many finds were revealed including coins, storage jars, and other artifacts. Many are preserved at Bar-Ilan University.

In 1981-1982, Zeev Yeivin and Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun dug out from the bedrock area of the presumed site of the Tabernacle. Ceramics and Egyptian figurines were found.



Discovered in the year 1927

On November 22, 1998, after weeks of excavations around the ancient building of Jama Ithi'im (remains of a Byzantine church), an enormous and well preserved mosaic floor was found.

There are plans for the continuation of the excavation, include digging below the floor level to find more evidence of a [synagogue](#).



Greek mosaic floor

## Remains

In this ancient home of the Tabernacle can be found remains of thousands year old wine and olive oil presses. The ancient city is encompassed by impressively large city walls, including remains of the city gates and watch towers. Upon approaching the city along the marked path, one can

see that the homes were built along identical lines, including storehouses for food and cisterns for rainwater storage.

The archeological digs in Tel Shilo revealed large clay jars that still held remains of raisins, scorched during the destruction and torching of the city of antiquity. Closer to the Tabernacle site are underground caves and warrens that tranverse the Tel, including cisterns and bathing pools.



**Synagogue from the Talmudic period**

## **The Cave of Abraham**

On the north-western edge of Tel Shilo, near the location of the Tabernacle, is a unique cave, which was an ancient dwelling place. Additional caves, cisterns and underground warrens branch off from this cave. Inside the cave, on the western wall, can be seen niches for oil lamps or candles.

To the west of the cave, near the entrance, there is a ritual bath (mikvah) with six descending steps, as is described the tractate *Mikvaot*. This place served the priests and Levites who came to the Tabernacle to perform their services — before approaching the Tabernacle compound they purified themselves in the nearby pool. The underground warrens lead to other parts of the Tel.

## **City Gates of Ancient Shilo**

Ancient Shilo's city gates have been identified in the southern side of Tel Shilo. Ancient Shilo was built by the [Canaanites](#) who had dwelt in the land; the city was captured by Joshua Bin Nun approximately 3500 years ago. The southern approach to the city was on a gradual rise, with easy



access. In the other directions were steep, rocky cliffs, making the city easier to defend.

In 1985, the Tel underwent an archeological expedition headed by professor Yisrael Finkelstein, which uncovered the ancient city's guard towers; a Canaanite wall, impressive in its size and beauty; remains of stone houses; and more. In some places the immense width of the city wall can be seen to reach 5.5 meters. The city covered an area of 17 dunam-walking through the city's ruins is fascinating. To the east of the Tel are discernable a well- preserved ampitheatre and the burial grounds of ancient Shilo.

## Synagogue of the Dome of the Divine Presence

The synagogue of the Dome of the Divine presence is located south of the Tel Shilo site on a knoll, from which one can view all of the Shilo valley, the road to [Jerusalem](#), and the mountain chain of Ba'al Hatzor.



Rabbi Ashtori Hafarchi reached the site in 1335 and found the building mostly intact. The synagogue is built in the same fashion as those in the [Galilee](#) from the Talmudic period. All have three entrances in the northern wall; in the southern wall is a niche for the [Holy Ark](#), facing Jerusalem. In the center of the building can be seen remains of the columns that supported the roof.

The outer walls slope inward and reach a height of two meters, giving the building an appearance similar to the Tent of Assembly. Around the entrance are embellishments unique to Jewish buildings, such as olive branches and urns.

## Burial site of Eli the High Priest and the Synagogue of Hannah's prayer

On the Southern side of Tel Shilo is a building of stones from several time periods. Rabbi Ashtori Hafarchi in his book *Kaftor V'ferach* tells of



passing by and seeing a group of Jews kneeling and praying by a stone weeping and praying. Upon his inquiring, they answered him that this was the burial place of Eli the High Priest. Some hundred years later, the archeologist Dalman in his writings identified the same spot as Eli's burial location.

On the Western side of the building grows an ancient fig tree, which is identified as the Shilo fig tree mentioned in the [Bible](#).

Upon ascending to the roof top of the synagogue building we see that a venerable oak tree is growing right through the roof. This tree is the only one of it's kind growing in this area, as is mentioned in the end of the [book of Joshua](#) as a symbol of the covenant reached between [G-d](#) and the children of Israel at the place of the Tabernacle.

Inside the synagogue, in the southern wall, facing Jerusalem, is a niche, which was used as a Holy Ark to hold [Torah](#) scrolls.

The building is also known as " The synagogue of [Hannah's prayer](#)," in accordance with what is told in [Samuel I Chapter 2, verse 1](#) "And Hannah prayed, saying my heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I rejoice in thy Salvation."

## **The Tabernacle Location-the Northern Plateau**

In the book of Joshua, [chapter 18](#) verse 1 it states: " The whole congregation of the Children of Israel assembled together at Shilo and erected there the Tent of Assembly, and the land was conquered before them.

The tent of assembly mentioned in the verse is the traveling sanctuary of the desert described in [Exodus](#). The principles used to identify the location of the Tabernacle in Shilo are: A. the dimensions of the Tabernacle and its surrounding courtyard B. the direction of the Tabernacle C. natural defendability against enemies

The first two principles are architectural rules governing the character of a public building such as the Tabernacle. It is logical to assume that initially the Tent of Assembly was housed in a transient sanctuary, as it had been during the desert years. The Tabernacle was located in Shilo for 369

years. According to the [Talmud](#) (Zevachim 119,) during the course of the years, a more permanent structure was erected to house the Tabernacle in Shilo. In the [Mishna](#) (Zevachim 14) it states: " And in Shilo there was no roof, but a building of stone below and cloth above, and it was a resting place."

In 1873 the explorer Wilson suggested the northern plateau of Tel Shilo as the possible site of the Tabernacle. In aerial photographs it is clear that there is an area north of the Tel that was hewn for some specific purpose. According to Wilson's measurements, the plateau is 77 feet long, i.e. 235 meters. Therefore, this location fits that all three requirements for identifying the site as that of the Tabernacle, dimensions, direction and naturally defensible.

There is great topographical similarity between this location and the location of the [Temple](#) on [Mount Moriah](#) in Jerusalem. both are enclosed by steep descents into valleys, with high hills surrounding the valleys; the southern approach is more gradual. The Temple is not on the summit of the mountain, but is beyond the summit, northward, at a lower point, in accordance with the words in [Leviticus](#) exhorting, "And you shall not go according to the practices of the nations, which I cast out before you". The other nations placed there altars on the highest mountain tops. The children of Israel's custom was different, as is seen in [Samuel II, chapter 24](#), when [King David's](#) prophet, Gad tells the King, "Go up, erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Arniya the Jehusite."

From a national, religious viewpoint, there is no doubt that the identifying of the location of the Tabernacle in Shilo is of paramount importance, strengthening the Jewish people's bond with their past.

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Source: [Shilo](#)

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## Tiberias: The Anchor Church

The city of Tiberias is located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. In the sixth century, at the peak of its expansion, the [Byzantine](#) emperor Justinian built a wall around the city which climbed up the steep slopes in the west and included the highest point, Mount Berenice. Here the remains of a [Byzantine](#) church with unusual cultic objects were uncovered in the years 1990-93. The church was included within the fortification wall of the city and its location affords a breathtaking view of the entire Sea of Galilee, its shores and the distant mountains.

The church complex measures 48 x 28 meters and includes an atrium courtyard, a basilical, tri-apsidal church and many rooms around the complex. The walls are of square basalt blocks coated with white plaster and the floor is paved with multi-colored mosaics.

The atrium courtyard is unusually spacious. It was surrounded by aisles resting upon square piers and was paved with mosaics in black and white frames. Beneath it is a large cistern, the ceiling of which is supported by a set of arches. Rainwater was collected from the roofs and from the courtyard and carried to the cistern via channels.

Running the length of the prayer-hall of the church were two rows of columns supporting the roofing. Two rows of semi-circular stone benches were situated along the central apse in the eastern wall. The floor of the church was in part paved with colored mosaics, depicting grapes, pomegranates and birds, and in part with marble tiles in geometric shapes.

At the center of the *bema* (stage) the base of a stone altar was found, and beneath it a marble plaque covering a depression containing a large, care-

fully fashioned basalt stone measuring 55 x 35 x 11 cm. The bottom part of the stone is crudely worked into a conical shape, indicating that it was originally set into the ground. At the center of the stone is a drilled, biconical perforation; it is obviously a type of anchor, a smaller version of which might have been used by boats sailing the Sea of Galilee. It was placed here, and probably venerated in connection with Jesus' activities on this side of the lake.

Surrounding the courtyard and the church were numerous rooms, with mosaic paving, which must have served the clergy who maintained the church and looked after the many visitors.

The church was damaged in the earthquake of 749. It was renovated on a smaller scale and had some Islamic architectural features, such as pointed arches and pairs of columns supporting them. This church, with only minor changes, remained in use during the Muslim rule of the country, a very uncommon phenomenon. The [Crusaders](#) strengthened the church structure with external buttresses and also added a bell tower to its facade.

The church was destroyed when the Muslims conquered Tiberias in 1187. Its remains were visible on the surface prior to the excavations and had remained relatively well-preserved thanks to the difficult access and the distance from the city of Tiberias.

*The excavations were directed by Y. Hirschfeld on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.*

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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### Timna: Valley of the Ancient Copper Mines

*"A land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper."*

Deuteronomy 8:9

The Timna Valley is located in the southwestern Arava, some 30 km. north of the Gulf of Eilat. It is a semi-circular, erosional formation of some 70 sq. km., opening in the east towards the Arava; on the north, west and south it is surrounded by cliffs, about 300 m. high. In the lower parts of these cliffs and on the slopes in front of them, copper-rich nodules (up to 55% copper) mainly of malachite and chalcocite, were mined in ancient times. Ever since man discovered, in the 6th millennium BCE, how to turn a 'piece of rock' into malleable metal, copper has been mined and smelted in the Timna Valley - even in modern times, by the Israeli Timna Mining Company, which is no longer in production.

Extensive remains of human activity during early periods are still visible in the rugged hills. There is evidence of copper mining in shafts and galleries and copper smelting in furnaces of various types, and there are remains of camps and several cult sites, including an Egyptian mining sanctuary.

The existence of the remains of copper production at Timna was known from surveys conducted at the end of last century, but scientific attention and public interest was aroused when in the 1930s Nelson Glueck attributed the copper mining at Timna to King Solomon (10th century

BCE) and named the site "King Solomon's Mines"; this theory has not been verified by subsequent field work.

Surveys and excavations in the Timna Valley were conducted between 1959 and 1990. From the surprising findings it is now possible to reconstruct the long and complex history of copper production there, from the Late Neolithic period to the Middle Ages. Mining activities in the Timna Valley reached a peak during the reign of the Pharaohs of the 14th-12th centuries BCE, when Egyptian mining expeditions, in collaboration with Midianites and local Amalekites, turned the Timna Valley into a large-scale copper industry.

## Copper mining

After an initial phase of surface collection of ore nodules in prehistoric times, the early miners followed outcropping ore veins underground. These earliest shafts, hammered into the rock with large and clumsy stone tools, were irregular big holes from which galleries spread in all directions, following the ore.

The Egyptian miners who came later used metal chisels and hoes and excavated very regular, tubular shafts, with footholds in the walls for moving down, and up, the shafts. Some of these shafts penetrated to a depth of 30 m. and more, before reaching the copper-rich sandstone formation. From the shafts, narrow galleries followed the ore occurrence, widening into underground cavities where large bodies of ore nodules had to be mined out. As the complex network of galleries grew, heavy loads of ore had to be dragged along the narrow galleries, to be hauled to the surface. These sophisticated multi-leveled shaft-and-gallery mines, with proper underground ventilation, are the earliest systematic mines of this kind discovered to date.

Mining was abandoned when the concentration of ore nodules declined. The abandoned shafts and galleries were either intentionally filled with mining waste, or gradually filled up with wind- and water-carried sand. Evidence of their existence is visible today in saucer-like "plates" — thousands of them — on the slopes below the Timna Cliffs.

## Copper production

The earliest, well-preserved copper smelting furnace dates from the 5th millennium BCE. It consisted of a small pit dug in the ground, with a low



substructure of field stones, and was ventilated by goatskin bellows. Smelting in these pits was primitive and inefficient.

During the following three millennia, copper was produced with steadily improving furnaces and control of the metallurgical processes. Already in the Chalcolithic period (4th millennium BCE), iron ore (available in Timna) was added as flux to the smelting charge of copper ore and charcoal, which greatly improved the smelting. Another big step forward, in the early third millennium BCE, was "tapping" the fluid slag out of the hot furnace, which made continuous smelting possible and saved precious fuel. The metallic copper produced by this process remained at the bottom of the furnace as an irregular ingot — probably the earliest copper ingot in history.

There is no evidence of mining or smelting in Timna from the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE until the late 2nd millennium BCE, when Egyptian mining expeditions arrived. There are the ruins of numerous work camps, mainly workshops for copper smelting. One of the larger (400 sq.m.) camps was excavated; in its central courtyard, a stone-lined storage pit contained copper ore nodules to be crushed on a nearby stone platform. A variety of grinding tools, such as granite hammers, mortars and pestles, anvils and "saddle-backed" sandstone querns were found on this platform. Near the smelting furnaces, at a distance from the workshops, slag heaps, charcoal pits, tuyères, stone tools and potsherds were found.

In the 14th century BCE, during the Egyptian-Midianite copper production at Timna, a very advanced smelting furnace, consisting of a bowl-shaped smelting hearth dug into the ground and lined with clay mortar, was in use. It was about 40 cm. in diameter and up to 50 cm. high. Some of the furnaces had a dome-shaped top. In front of the smelting hearth was a shallow pit, flanked by two large stones, which served as the slag tapping pit. A clay tube penetrated the furnace wall opposite the tapping hole and served as a tuyère through which air was blown by pot-bellows. For each furnace three bellows were needed and the smelting area was littered with hundreds of tuyère fragments.

## **The Hathor Temple**

At the foot of the huge sandstone formation in the center of the Timna Valley known as "King Solomon's Pillars," a small Egyptian temple was excavated. Dedicated to Hathor, Egyptian goddess of mining, it was

founded during the reign of Pharaoh Seti I (1318-1304 BCE) and served the members of the Egyptian mining expeditions and also their local co-workers. The sanctuary consisted of an open courtyard measuring 9 x 6 m., with a *naos* (cult chamber), where a niche had been cut into the rock, apparently to house a statue of Hathor. The temple was badly damaged by earthquake and rebuilt during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses II (1304-1237 BCE), with an enlarged courtyard (10 x 9 m.) and a new, solid white floor. The walls were made of local sandstone and granite but the facade was of white sandstone from the mining area. The temple, with its two square columns bearing Hathor heads, must have been an exciting sight in the light of the rising sun. In the temple courtyard there was a workshop for casting copper figurines as votive offerings. Among the finds in this temple were hieroglyphic inscriptions including cartouches (seals) of most of the pharaohs who reigned in the 14th-12th centuries BCE. There were also numerous other Egyptian-made votive offerings, including many copper objects, alabaster vessels, cat and leopard figurines of faience, seals, beads and scarabs as well as Hathor sculptures, figurines and plaques. Altogether several thousand artifacts were uncovered in the Egyptian temple.

With the decline of Egyptian control of the region in the middle of the 12th century BCE, the mines at Timna and the Hathor temple were abandoned. However, cultic activities in the temple were restored by the Midianites, who remained in Timna for a short period after the Egyptians left. They cleared most traces of the Egyptian cult and effaced the images of Hathor and the Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions on the *stelae*. Other changes were made: a row of *mazeboth* (*stelae*), was erected and a 'bench of offerings' was built on both sides of the entrance. Remains of woolen cloth found along the courtyard walls provide evidence that the Midianites turned the Egyptian temple into a tented desert shrine. Among the finds in this Midianite shrine was a large number of votive gifts brought especially from Midian, including beautifully decorated Midianite pottery and metal jewelry. Of particular significance is the find of a copper snake with gilded head. It is reminiscent of the copper serpent described in Numbers 21:6-9.

The evidence of a sophisticated Midianite culture, as found in Timna, is of extraordinary importance in the light of the Biblical narrative of the meeting of Moses and Jethro, high priest of Midian, and the latter's participation in the organization and cult of the Children of Israel in the desert. (Exodus 18)

The survey and excavations at Timna were conducted by B. Rotenberg, on behalf of the 'Arava Expedition' under the auspices of the Ha'aretz Museum of Tel Aviv, the Institute of Archeology, Tel Aviv University and (since 1974) the Institute for Archeo-Metallurgical Studies of University College, London.

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## Top Archaeological Discoveries in Israel

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### The Tel Dan ("House of David") Stele

Discovered at [Tel Dan](#) in 1993-94, the inscription dates to the 9th century [BCE](#) and commemorates the defeat of a coalition led by Jehoram, king of Israel, and Ahaz, king of the House of David (Judah) by the Arameans. It's important as the first mention of David outside the Bible.

### The Ekron Inscription

An inscribed stone found in 1996 at Tel Mique (Ekron of the Bible) is a temple dedication in Hebrew left by a late Philistine ruler, Ikausu (the Biblical Achish), in the 7th century BCE, when the [Assyrians](#) ruled Palestine. It reveals previously unknown Philistine adoption of Hebrew script.

### The Canaanite Palace of Hazor

The palace, currently being excavated, dates back to the Late Bronze Age (circa 1400-1300 BCE). This magnificent edifice was destroyed in a great conflagration, probably by the Israelites. Found in the debris: stone and metal statues, ivory and metal implements and clay tablets from the Canaanite kingdom of Hazor.

### Jerusalem Excavations

The large [excavations](#) near the [Western Wall](#) and the [Temple](#) Mount

complex begun after the [Six-Day War](#) have dramatically expanded understanding of [Jerusalem's](#) history.

## **Masada**

Excavations, started by [Yigal Yadin](#) in 1963, gradually unveiled the dramatic confrontation at [Masada](#) between a Roman legion and Jewish freedom fighters in a Herodian fortress at the time of the [Second Temple](#) (73 CE).

## **Phoenician Shipwrecks**

Two almost intact Phoenician shipwrecks from the 7th or 8th century BCE were found in the summer of 1999 on the ocean floor off the Israeli coast. It is hoped their contents will increase knowledge about maritime trade and seamanship in the late Iron Age.

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Source: [Jerusalem Report](#), (Oct. 11, 1999)

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# Underwater Exploration Along Israel's Mediterranean Coast

Along the Mediterranean coast of the Land of Israel there has always been maritime activity, both of a commercial and a military nature. Evidence of this is provided by the many shipwrecks lying on the floor of the sea near the coast.

Israel's coastline lacks deep natural harbors and the small craft of ancient times had to find shelter from storms in the mouths of rivers. As early as the first millennium BCE, the capacity of ships plying the Mediterranean had increased considerably, necessitating the construction of deep-water ports for safe anchorage.

Since the 1960s, extensive underwater surveys and excavations have been conducted along the coast of Israel, with the aim of exposing remains of harbors, shipwrecks and cargoes.

## Atlit – A Submerged Neolithic Village

Atlit, some 15 kms. south of [Haifa](#), is known for the ruins of a [Crusader](#) castle. In the Neolithic period, the level of the Mediterranean was some 20 m. lower than it is today, and the coastal plain was much wider.

Some 400 m. off today's shore, at a depth of eight to twelve meters, an 8,000-year-old Neolithic village was discovered under a layer of sand carried there by waves and currents, with its dwellings and artifacts well preserved.



Twelve structures with paved courtyards and plazas between them were excavated. At the edge of the village was a long brick wall, probably for protection against winter floods which filled the nearby *wadi* (dry river bed). A 5.5 m.-deep well cut into the sandstone, its upper part lined with stones, provided water for the village. Bronze was not yet in use during this period, and this is the earliest example of a well dug with axes and hammers of stone. Between the village houses were several stone-lined pits, two to three meters in diameter; they were silos for the storage of food. Fifteen tombs, some within the houses, were also found.

Many flint and bone artifacts were salvaged from the seabed, as well as stone bowls used in this pre-pottery period. Animal bones found indicate that the village's economy was based on farming and incipient herding, hunting and fishing.

Glacial melting following the last ice age caused the sea level to rise, reducing the area of the coastal plain along the Mediterranean. Seepage of seawater into the wells was probably the cause for the abandonment of the village – which then became submerged.

## **Atlit – The Phoenician Harbor**

The sunken foundations of this Phoenician harbor (dated to the 7th-6th centuries BCE) are believed to be those of the earliest known port with built breakwaters. The breakwaters were built of straight walls enclosing a natural bay. The foundations consist of large ashlar blocks laid on the rock of the seabed and along a small islet offshore. A wall which included a gate separated the harbor from the city.

The cargoes of several vessels were found at the bottom of the harbor and around it. Among them are stone anchors and large amphorae used for transporting wine from the Greek islands.

## **Atlit – The Ram of an Ancient Warship**

The ram of a Hellenistic naval vessel was discovered in the northern bay of Atlit, at a depth of four meters. It is cast of bronze, is 2.26 meters long and weighs almost half a ton. Encased in its rear are the bow timbers of the ship to which it was attached. The front has three protruding horizontal fins, a development from the earlier, pointed ram; this improved its ability to “ram” the enemy's hull.

The ram is decorated with mythological symbols known from Greek iconography: the eagle (on each side); the trident or thunderbolt; a helm surmounted by the eight-pointed star of the Dioskouri, the protectors of seafarers; and the caduceus or *kerkeion*, symbol of Hermes. These symbols provide clues regarding the provenance and date of the ship: it is believed to have been built in Cyprus for King Ptolemy VI (204-184 BCE).

## Caesarea Maritima

The large deep-water port built by [Herod the Great](#) at [Caesarea](#) Maritima is described in detail by [Josephus Flavius](#). (*The Jewish War I*, 408-415)

The harbor consisted of three consecutive basins and its construction was completed around the year 10 BCE. The survey and undersea excavations conducted there revealed a high level of engineering technology at this oldest known example of sophisticated harbor construction, as well as in-depth knowledge of underwater currents and the movement of sand.

The large, outer basin of the harbor was created by constructing two breakwaters enclosing a large area of open sea. Later, as a result of tectonic activity, the foundations of this large, outer harbor sank into the seabed. An arc-shaped breakwater, some 500 m. long, was built along the southern and western sides of the harbor. In the north, a shorter breakwater of about 180 m. length was built westward, at right angles to the shore. Parts of the breakwaters consisted of large ashlar blocks, weighing several tons each, laid as headers on the seabed. Other portions were constructed of enormous chunks of conglomerate cast of hydraulic cement and stone in wooden frames, sunken to the seabed. The long breakwater was 40 - 60 m. wide, on which service and storage facilities were built. Its narrow, inner portion facing the harbor served as a pier for loading and unloading.

At the northern end of the long breakwater are the foundations of a structure built of particularly large blocks and preserved almost to the water level. These are probably the remains of the huge lighthouse "Drusion" that stood at the entrance to the harbor, referred to by Josephus.

The middle basin of the harbor was smaller (220 x 200 m.) and followed the contours of a natural bay. Its quays, 4.5 m. wide, were constructed of ashlar blocks. In its southern part the remains of the Crusader port-fortress and the modern fishermen's quay stand today.

The inner basin was the smallest, surrounded by the city on three sides. It had been in use in the Hellenistic period, was developed by Herod the Great and became obsolete in the [Byzantine](#) period, as a result of continuous silting.

## **The Harbor of Akko (Acre)**

The ancient harbor of [Akko](#) was located where the modern fishing harbor is situated today, south of the promontory on which the Old City is built. The earliest man-made construction dates to the Persian period (6th-5th centuries BCE). At that time, a breakwater was built running east to west and enclosing a basin of about 100 dunams (one dunam = 1/4 acre) which offered sea anchor-age and port facilities to the growing number of merchantmen. The breakwater was 260 m. long and 12 m. wide, built of large ashlar blocks laid as headers on a layer of pebbles and shells. During the [Roman](#) period, the breakwater was rebuilt with enormous blocks, measuring 12 x 2 x 2 meters, placed about one meter apart.

At the entrance to the harbor, some 70 m. east of the end of the breakwater, stands the Tower of Flies (also called Manara, "light house"). The ancient construction, broadening the natural underwater rock outcrop, is still visible at its base.

## **The Shipwreck at Ma'agan Michael**

A seagoing ship of the Persian period was discovered 70 m. off the coast at Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael. Covered with a heavy layer of sand, the hull was exceptionally well preserved from stem to stern and almost up to the waterline. It was built of pine timber with mortise and tenon joining, using the "shell first" mode of construction. Its bow and stern strengthened with fiber lashings, the frames were then installed to support the structure. Also well preserved was the ship's keel which was made of a single beam. The vessel was originally 13.5 m. long, with a four-meter beam and a displacement of 25 tons.

A unique, one-armed wooden anchor was found intact at the side of the bow. Among the contents of the vessel were a set of carpenter's tools, several large storage jars, ceramic utensils, ropes and remnants of food, as well as a heavy load of ballast stones. On a commercial voyage, the ship probably foundered and was abandoned.

## The Wreck with Figurines

Scattered along the submerged kurkar ridge off the coast of Shavei Zion, a village north of Akko, hundreds of clay figurines were found by a diver-fisherman in 1974. The ship carrying this load of votive terra-cotta figurines must have sunk en route to one of the coastal sanctuaries. The figurines, produced in molds ranging in size from 10 to 30 cm., represent the Goddess Tinit, chief of the Punic pantheon. Her sign, composed of a triangle with a superimposed horizontal bar and a disk, is clearly visible on some of the figurines' pedestals. The figurines were dated to the 5th century BCE.

The presence of such an assembly of figurines of the Goddess Tinit on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean calls attention to cultural and historical issues regarding the relationship between the Phoenician metropoli and their colonies during the 5th century BCE.

## Weapons Abandoned by Napoleon's Army

A cannon, a mortar and some smaller weapons dumped in the sea by Napoleon's army on its southward retreat from [Acre](#) (Akko) in May 1799, were found off the coast of Dor (north of Ma'agan Michael). The Turkish-made bronze cannon is 1.60 m. long; it was taken as booty by Napoleon's army on its way northwards to Akko. The mortar poses a riddle: Manufactured in Seville, Spain in 1793 (it is so inscribed), it is 6 inches in diameter and weighs 333 kg. But how did it become part of Napoleon's weaponry?

*The underwater surveys and excavations were carried out by the Department of Maritime Civilizations of Haifa University, the Israel Undersea Exploration Society and the Israel Antiquities Authority, under the direction of: E. Galili (the Neolithic village); E. Linder and A. Raban (Atlit Harbor); A. Raban (Port of Caesarea); E. Linder (Harbor of Akko, the ram, the Ma'agan Michael shipwreck and the finds from Shavei Zion); S. Wachsman and K. Raveh (the Napoleonic artillery)*

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## Yodefatz

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Ancient Yodefatz is located in central Galilee, on a hill rising to 419 m. above sea level. Deep valleys surround the hill on all sides except the north, where a low saddle separates it from the rest of the mountain range. In rabbinic sources, Yodefatz is described as a fortress dating from the time of Joshua; it was among the towns captured by Tiglath Pileser III in 732 BCE. In the [Second Temple period](#) Yodefatz was an important Jewish town, mentioned in the [Mishna and the Talmud](#) (Jewish Oral Law). Its geographical position is precisely as described by the 1st century historian [Josephus Flavius](#). (Wars III, 7,7)

Between 1992 and 1998, seven excavation seasons were conducted in the remains of Yodefatz. Fortifications and buildings of the Hellenistic and [Roman periods](#) and clear evidence of the town's destruction during the Jewish revolt against Rome were uncovered.

### The Fortifications

A small village was built on the top of the hill of Yodefatz during the [Hellenistic period](#) (3rd-2nd centuries BCE). In the 1st century BCE, under [Hasmonean rule](#), the crest of the hill was surrounded by a wall, whilst the northern side, devoid of natural defenses, was fortified by a 5.5 m. thick double wall, strengthened with massive towers. During the [Early Roman period](#) (end of the 1st century BCE - beginning of the 1st century CE), a new town wall was constructed on the southern part of the hill, expanding the town's area to some 13 acres.

### The Residential Quarters



Densely built-up residential areas, some with narrow lanes along the town's wall, were constructed in the early [Roman Period](#). The houses were built on terraces, their backs cut into the rock of the hillside; where this was steep, the rooms were built as "steps", each up to half a meter higher than the previous room. The dwellers of these quarters had to rely on rock-cut cisterns for their water supply since there is no nearby spring, yet in some of the houses, *mikva'ot* (Jewish ritual baths) were found. In the southern part of the town a number of pottery kilns were uncovered, and dozens of clay loom weights were found in the ruins of one of the houses, indicating that weaving took place there. The remains of a large mansion near the top of the town, some of its rooms decorated with frescos painted in geometric patterns and as imitation marble, are evidence of some wealth.

## The Destruction of Yodefath

Yosef ben Matityahu (the contemporary historian who called himself [Josephus Flavius](#)) was born of a priestly family; he was appointed commander of the Galilee at the outbreak of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 66 CE and undertook the fortification of several towns, the key fortress being Yodefath.

In 67 CE, the Roman army under Vespasian (who was soon to become Emperor of Rome) besieged the city, which held out for 47 days. Josephus himself describes the siege, the suicide pact of the last defenders and his own surrender to the Romans. (Wars III, 7)

Remains of the Roman siege ramp were found in the northern part of the town. Evidence of the battle that took place here includes dozens of iron arrowheads, ballista stones and heavy rolling stones. The skeletons of some 30 men, women and children in a water cistern, are silent, but vivid testimony to the fate of Yodefath's inhabitants.

A personal memento, created by one of Yodefath's residents, is a flat stone (10 x 9 cm.) with incised drawings: on its face is a structure with a stepped podium and gabled roof (a mausoleum of the type decorating ossuaries used for burial in Jerusalem at the time); on the reverse, a crab is depicted. These motifs have been interpreted as representing death (the mausoleum), and the time of the defeat - the Hebrew month of Tamuz, whose sign is the crab.



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## Zippori

The city of [Zippori](#) (Sepphoris), described by the first century CE Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius, as "the ornament of all Galilee," is located on a hill in the Lower Galilee, midway between the Mediterranean and Lake Kinneret ([Sea of Galilee](#)), with abundant spring water and a fertile valley around it.

[Zippori](#) is mentioned in many Jewish sources of the first centuries of the common era. Founded in the [Hellenistic](#) era, it was named the administrative capital of Galilee by Gabinius, the Roman governor, in the mid-first century BCE. The city did not join the [revolt against Rome](#) in 66 CE; it opened its gates to the legions of the [Roman Emperor](#) Vespasian and was thus saved. On coins minted in [Zippori](#) at that time, the city is named Eirenopolis, "city of peace." Later, its name was changed to Diocaesarea in honor of Zeus and the emperor.

By the second century, [Zippori](#) had become the center of Jewish religious and spiritual life in the Land of Israel. The Sanhedrin (supreme Jewish religious and judicial body), headed by Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, was located in [Zippori](#) at the beginning of the third century; at this time Jews constituted the majority of the town's population. Even after the seat of the Sanhedrin was moved to [Tiberias](#), [Zippori](#) remained a center of Bible study and notable sages taught in its numerous academies.

The discovery of rich, figurative mosaics during excavations at [Zippori](#) provide evidence of the Roman character of the city's pagan population, which coexisted in harmony with the Jews during the period of economic prosperity in the late [Roman period](#). [Zippori](#) was destroyed in 363 by an

earthquake, but was rebuilt soon thereafter, retaining its social and spiritual centrality in Jewish life in the Galilee.

During [Byzantine](#) times, the Christian community in [Zippori](#) grew considerably. This growth was accompanied by the construction of many churches and by Christian involvement in municipal matters. Following the [Arab conquest](#) in the mid-seventh century, the city declined.

Under [Crusader](#) rule during the 12th century, a small watchtower and a church (dedicated to Anne and Joachim, parents of Mary, mother of Jesus) were built on the city's hilltop. The remains of the watchtower, partly renovated in later times, still dominates the hilltop today.

During the Roman and Byzantine periods an acropolis existed on the hilltop and a sprawling lower city covered a cradle-shaped ridge east of the acropolis.

Since 1990 large areas of [Zippori](#) have been excavated, illuminating the written history of the city.

## The Acropolis

The original residential quarters of the city have been exposed on the western side of the acropolis. The remains indicate that the earliest occupation of [Zippori](#) dates back to the Hasmonean and Herodian periods (from the end of the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE). The buildings, one and two stories high, were built on both sides of a narrow paved street. A characteristic feature are the many Jewish ritual baths (mikva'ot) for domestic use, hewn in bedrock and plastered, with several steps leading to the bottom.

## The Theater

A large theater, 74 m. in diameter and containing 4,500 seats, was built on the northern slope of the acropolis in the Roman period. Its semicircular auditorium was partly cut into the hillside, while its wings and upper parts were supported by stone foundations and vaults. The theater was badly damaged in antiquity.

## The Roman Villa

A magnificent third century Roman villa was exposed on the western side of the acropolis. This two-story residence contained many rooms, some paved with colorful mosaics, surrounding a central, atrium-type courtyard; columns supported its covered porticos.

The courtyard was connected by doors to a triclinium, the largest room in the building, paved with a magnificent mosaic floor. The decorated part of the floor formed the shape of the letter T, which enabled guests, reclining on couches on three sides of the room, to enjoy the many panels of the floor. They depict, in over twenty shades of colored tesserae, the life of Dionysos, Greek god of wine, and scenes of daily life connected with the rites of Dionysos.

## The Lower City

A large area of the lower city east of the acropolis has been exposed. First inhabited during the second century, it presents a well-planned network of streets and blocks (*insulae*) of buildings. Two colonnaded, paved streets with roofed sidewalks - the *cardo*, and the intersecting *decumanus* - had shops on both sides. The streets underwent many changes in the course of hundreds of years. One such change took place at the end of the Byzantine period, when the sidewalks were repaved with mosaics of geometric design. The accompanying Greek inscription reads: "Under our most saintly father Euthropius the Episcopus, the whole city, in the time of the fourteenth indiction."

The largest and most impressive building so far exposed is the 5th century "Nile Festival House," covering an area of 50 x 30 m. Some 20 rooms have beautiful, multi-colored mosaic floors; the most elegant, preserved almost intact, depicts scenes of the Nile Festival.

## The Synagogue

Remains of a 6th century synagogue were exposed in the lower city. The synagogue was elongated in shape (16 m. x 6.5 m.) with a line of columns dividing it into a main hall and a narrow aisle. The mosaic in the main hall, partly damaged, has a zodiac in the center with the sun god Helios in his chariot, surrounded by human figures, the signs of the zodiac and the names of the months. The carpet is divided into strips, some depicting scenes from the Bible (Abraham and the angels, the binding of Isaac), others Temple rituals (a sacrifice, offering of first fruits and the table with the shewbread.)

Since 1990, most of the archeological work at the site is carried out on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under the direction of Z. Weiss and E. Netzer. Previously the site was excavated by a joint team of the University of North Carolina and the Hebrew University, directed by E.M. Meyers, C.L. Meyers and E. Netzer. Expeditions on behalf of the University of South Florida and Duke University, under E.M. Meyers, C.L. Meyers and K. Hoglund, are at present also working at the site.

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## The Glass from Sepphoris

(1983-1991)

**A Preliminary Report by Joan Keller, Glass Historian**

### The University of South Florida's Excavations at Sepphoris, Israel

M. L. Trowbridge, in his 1928, "Philological Studies in Ancient Glass", wrote that it had been stated by a scholar in the field of glass studies that to the Greeks of the classical age, "glass was something rather foreign; to the Romans of the 1st. C. After Christ, something new." (Trowbridge, p. 150) neither of these statements mention, in fact, any reference to the Jews. According to the [Mishna and Talmud](#) and other post-biblical writings, (from about the 1st c. BCE to the 6th. C. CE), glassmaking was a common Jewish craft and was the subject of laws, legends and regulations which throw light on every branch of the industry. For example, a midrash illuminates that statement, "even as from the sand which he puts into the flame a man gets a transparent mass from which he makes a vessel of glass, even as the Jews came forth from the fire. (Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, Chap. 2.) Rabbi Jose taught, "if a vessel of glass, made with breath blown by a mortal, can be reshaped if it is broken, how much more true is this of a human being made with breath blown by the Holy One, blessed be He..." (Midrash, Psalms, 2.11) "that Jews, too, produced glass is evident from references to glass maker's tools and furnaces in the Mishna and Tosephta, as well as from the remains of a glass factory at Beth She'arim and a number of objects decorated with menorah and other Jewish symbols. The archaeological data are of no aid in assessing the



scope of Jewish glass makers, though this should not lead to exaggerations in either direction." (Barag, p. vi)

Sepphoris was a center of talmudic study. Many academies were located there. Also its location on or near major trade routes in the lower Galilee, made it a prime market for traders of all commodities. It was, for most of its flourishing years, a thriving city with a large enough population to require a great variety of different products. What better place to explore the glass market! Economic times were not always good, however, and it seems that according to Stuart Miller, in his 1980 dissertation, "The Studies in the History and Tradition of Sepphoris", the rabbinical scholars who helped compile the Talmud and Mishna frequently earned their living by working in what seems to be most humble occupations - carpenters, shoemakers, potters and smiths among them. One is tempted to believe, therefore, that glass makers, glassware manufacturers, or glass merchants, must have been among this group. R. Johanan, who was born in Sepphoris, was for most of his life, the head of the academy at Tiberius. He had the by-name of bar Nappakha, "son of a smith". "Son" in this case, meant that he was a member of a guild of smiths, according to I. Mendelsohn's 1940 publication, "Guilds in Ancient Palestine". He continues, the use of son is illustrated in an interesting statement in the Midrash, "one who loved him called him "son of a goldsmith"; one who hated him would call him , "son of a potter"; one who neither loved nor hated him, would call him "son of a glassmaker" (Midrash Numbers 11:17). The fact that glassmakers bought glass in bulk to rework on their own premises, and that along with glassware was conveyed by sacks and baskets, on the backs of donkeys (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath, 154b), suggests that the glass business in some form or another, was carried on frequently as a home industry in ancient Palestine. The products would then be marketed by peddlers circulating around the countryside, collecting merchandise to be sold at the great fairs at Akko , Tyre, and Sidon. Interestingly enough, the coins found at Sepphoris have been identified as those from Ashkelon, Tyre, Sidon, Dor, and other Byzantine And arab issues. (Miller, p. 5-6). It is possible that a number of these communities banded together in trading and marketing arrangements as was the case with regard to Kfar Hananiah, the center of a closely-settled area on the border of upper & lower Galilee. According to the Palestinian Talmud, (Ma'asroth ii.3/2 49d), there was a group of 4 or 5 villages which stood in some special form of trading arrangement with K'far Hannaniah. The men of that place spent their whole time circulating among these villages, only returning to their home to sleep. The same situation might apply to another community, K'far Shikhnin, which like K'far Hannaniah, was famous for its pottery. Kfar Shikhnin is located on a promontory just

to the north of Sepphoris. This literary evidence, suggests a consideration that if the dispersal of glass and glassware followed that of pottery, it might follow that Sepphoris may have been part of a far-flung but coordinated trading organization.

Before considering the amount and diversity of glass forms found at the site, mention should be made of some of the general and specific observations of other researchers in the field that are certainly relevant to our study. There is general agreement that after the process of free-blowing was perfected, it spread rapidly along the near eastern trade routes and became available to those cities and towns requiring the product. Also the forms seem to be pretty universal throughout the north, east, south and west in the ancient world. Paul Parrot, former director of the Corning Museum of Glass, wrote the introductory remarks to the Jalame volume. He stated that, "we have confirmed what the Talmud suggests, that the raw materials were melted into ingots or cullet in one place and then shipped to be remelted and shaped into objects in another". (Weinberg, p. Xii.) Weinberg mentions, for example, a marked change that occurred in the economy in Jalame in 351, "most vividly reflected in the sudden increase in the number of coins found...explained only by assuming a great increase of commercial activity...associated with a glass factory...". This drastic change must be associated with the cataclysmic events associated with the Gallus Revolt which erupted in Sepphoris in June of that year. This event affected the Galilee especially, and according to Avi-Yonah, after the rebellion was put down, "no Jews are mentioned in three cities and fifteen villages, most of them in the Galilee." (Avi-Yonah, M., p. 180). To pursue this further, and thus consider again the possibility of a 'Sepphoris' connection, let us consider Weinberg's observation that the Jalame factory was in no sense a pioneer establishment; "the glassblowers certainly worked elsewhere before and they and their successors probably continued to work at other places after leaving Jalame." (Weinberg, p. 24). It certainly seems conceivable that with the possible destruction of the market at Sepphoris in 351, and the establishment of the glass factory at Jalame during the same year, glassware workers may have moved on to pursue their livelihood. This assumption is strengthened by a comment made by Meyers in her Jerash report when she mentions that "it seemed cheaper in the long run to import a glass-worker than to import the product." (Meyers, p. 281). To move on to other observations concerning ancient glass production, Von Saldern, in his "Ancient and Byzantine Glass from Sardis", stated that shortly before and after AD 400 when western Roman rule diminished greatly or had ceased to exist altogether in the east and west, glass manufacture suffered a noticeable reduction in output and quality of work.

He continues that particularly in Palestine, ordinary hollow glassware, windows and tesserae were probably the sole products of workshops that catered to a clientele satisfied w/ simple glass utensils for everyday use. Everyday forms gave way to a more limited variety of shapes, decorative devices were kept to a minimum, and the total number of objects seem to have been much less than in the 3rd. & 4th. C. (Von Saldern, pps. 1-2) however, Barag does not agree entirely. Even though "...A slow and continuous decline sets in and the glass types of the byzantine period are mostly degenerated forms of earlier types" and that "the repertory also decreased considerably...", He suggests that factories within the eastern Roman empire continued to make glass that was very similar to that of the 4th. C. The basic forms & the predominant fabric of the 4th.C. (syrian blue-green), continued to be used in the 5th. & 6th. C. He continues that "there is, however, no evidence of decline in the quantities produced, nor is there evidence for a decline in quality of the fabric employed." (Barag, p. iv)

The excavated areas at Sepphoris, thus far have yielded public buildings and baths, residential areas, an amphitheater, market building, industrial installations mikva'oth, cisterns, and a complex drainage system.

The corpus of cataloged glass at Sepphoris through 1991 belongs to the time period from mid-Hellenistic, (mid 2nd. C. BCE-) through what we call Arab II, ( 13th.C. C.E.). The highest concentration falls within the 4th. C. Most common are bowls with various types of rims, followed by bottles of various types from storage vessels to small unguent or cosmetic bottles. Most forms seem to be utilitarian and there are innumerable fragments of window glass, lamps, jugs, cups, and objects, such as tubes, cosmetic tools, and jewelry. Also there are many fragments so fused together that they seem to have been in a very hot damaging conflagration. Still others were manufactured so poorly, or are so disfigured, that it is considered that they may have been put aside to be recycled into cullet which could then be resold to the glassware maker.

Since there are no complete vessels or objects, one must agree with Weinberg when she states that "...classification is often difficult when fragments constitute the chief evidence." (Weinberg, p.38). It is obvious that the glassmakers were accustomed to producing many kinds of rims and bases & that they assembled these in various ways. Therefore it is not always certain whether a particular base fragment for example, belongs to a shallow bowl, cup or dish. This has certainly been found to be the case, in that we have multiple types of feet, bottoms, bases, or handle fragments that cannot be identified definitely as part of a particular vessel. The same

holds true for similar rim diameters that could be identified with cups, bottles, or small bowls. We have to be constantly on the look-out for subtle differences and multiple criteria that help us to narrow down the identification of forms. We have classified these questionable fragments as 'unidentified' up to this point.

The period of time covered by our investigation of glass finds at Sepphoris is the 1983 through 1991 excavation seasons. The number of pieces cataloged are 779. Of these the total number of identifiable forms from all fields are 535. I have not processed window glass, cullet, slag, or handles unless they are applied to a readable rim. The break-down of forms is 238 bowls, 142 bottles, 81 cups, 16 jars, 12 lamps, 13 pieces of jewelry, 10 jugs, 12 goblets, and 18 fragments of various small objects, for example, rods, tubes, discs, and game pieces. There are 244 unidentifiable fragments. Approximately twice the number of identifiable forms come from field V where the mercantile and industrial areas have been excavated, as compared to all of those pieces from fields I through IV. These numbers may change as the 1992-'94 fragments are evaluated. At least 2000 fragments were found in three drains in field V in 1993 alone. Also there is a possibility that the areas of field I may be reopened before the final excavations are completed.

The most common form identified from all fields was the bowl of various depths, with some variety of rounded thickened rim, which is not unusual, as this seems to be the case at most of the sites used as parallels. We do have two most unusual pieces that fall within the bowl category that bear mentioning: one is an example of a bowl with the thickened rim, however, it has a shallow groove that runs along the middle of the lip of the rim that closely parallels what we call the ceramic "Galilean bowl", first identified by one of our former excavation projects in the upper Galilee in the 1970's. Thus far, I have been unable to find a glass parallel to this form. Another bowl with a double-fold rim, that has been found at Bet Shearim with a rim d. of 52cm., has also been found at our site with a 57cm. rim d., The largest one seen by Dr. David Whitehouse at the Corning Museum, at least as of Fall, 1993 (his personal observation).

To date, I have utilized 14 site reports and 5 museum collection catalogs to search out the parallels for our glass finds. By far, the majority of our identifiable forms parallel those cataloged at Jalame, the site of a glass factory in late Roman Palestine located east of Haifa. The excavations at that site resulted in a volume edited by Gladys Weinberg, published in 1988. According to Paul Perrot, former director of the Corning Museum, in his introductory remarks, the factory was in full production between



351 - 383 CE, mainly based on the large number of coins dating from about that time period, with very few dating before and after. ("Weinberg", p. Xii) following closely behind Jalame, are Hanita and Nahariya, published by Dan Barag; Crowfoot's, Samaria, Harden's Karanis in Egypt, and Vessberg's Cyprus. We have a few unique rims with parallels at Meiron and Khirbet Shema, and some from Bet She'arim and Shavei Zion. Parallels to our goblets and lamps are consistently found at Sardis, rather than primarily at Jalame, which was a surprise as, in fact, Weinberg reported finding very few of these forms. The cast grooved bowls were also found at Tel Anafa, and are illustrated in the Toledo Museum of Art catalog. They dated from mid 2nd. C, BCE to 1st. C. CE. However, the majority of our forms for which parallels were found carried a 4th. C. dating. This does not mean that the same form was not produced on a continuing basis for some time to come. Some of the small bottles were produced from 1st. through the 4th. C. The other forms were dated somewhere between the earliest, which we have mentioned, through the 13th. C. Of course modern pieces were found on the surface and in modern fill.

In summary:

- 1. There are no complete vessels or objects.
- 2. There is very little early or late luxury glass except a few Islamic pieces (a decorated gaming piece and a fragment with multicolored feather and combed design).
- 3. We consider that most of our finds are for utilitarian use.
- 4. The predominant color or shades of color are blue-green, various shades of green, yellow-green, blue, and colorless. There are a few pieces of amber, deeper blue, and black.
- 5. The majority of decorative motifs consist of wound threads of the same or contrasting color as the vessel. There are a few vessels with horizontal stripes of contrasting colors.
- 6. The weathering was mostly white or creamy white with a lot of iridescence. Some pieces had very dark to black weathering.
- 7. The glass finds have been considered in context with the dating of coins, pottery, mosaics and standing architecture where possible.
- 8. We do not have conclusive evidence that glass or glassware was produced at Sepphoris, except, perhaps a mama-papa type recycling operation. (one other has been found in another area on the site.) however, with the quantity of glass fragments found elsewhere, along with waste, what seems to be raw glass, and a number of what may be limestone crucibles, some lined with glass, it certainly warrants continued investigation.

In conclusion, we plan to continue to evaluate and to catalog the vast quantity of glass fragments that will probably continue to be found throughout the rest of our excavations at Sepphoris. In so far as is possible, we will identify and draw the forms, offering as much detail as possible concerning each individual fragment. Eventually we hope to produce a volume that will offer enough definitive information on the Sepphoris glass finds so that we will have a well researched corpus of glass that will aid other excavation projects in the processing and publication of their material. The Galilean region seems to be rich in glass finds which deserve to be published. It is our hope that our efforts will further the development of a corpus of glass unique to that region and perhaps beyond.

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## NOTE:

All publications, site reports, dissertations, etc., that were used to find parallels to the glass forms are not mentioned above, but are available from the author. Contact [Professor Longstaff \(t\\_longst@colby.edu\)](mailto:t_longst@colby.edu) for further information.

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## The Zippori Reservoir

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One of the things you should make a note to see at [Zippori](#) is located about a kilometer from the main site. It is an ancient water reservoir, from the [Roman](#) and [Byzantine](#) periods. This reservoir contained a valve that enabled the regulation of water flow and was apparently built in two phases, during the 2nd and 4th centuries CE. It was in use until the 7th century. It is currently easy to miss the reservoir, but in the near future the entrance to the park will be closer to it and then visitors will be less likely to miss it.

Tsvika Tsuk, Director Department of Archaeology and Heritage at the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority described the Zippori reservoir as "A technological wonder which was dug on a geological fault, almost 2000 years ago. Being inside this space causes us to both respect and admire whoever planned it." Tsuk noted that a similar reservoir, most likely planned by the same person, is located close to Irbid, in Jordan. According to Tsuk the Zippori reservoir was built because the springs here were so meager, water simply had to be collected.

The sheer size of the reservoir can only be felt by standing inside this wonder of ancient engineering. Today, visitors to the park can walk down roughly 40 steps into one of two reservoirs. Once at the bottom you can proceed through the tunnel that connects to the second reservoir and walk back up, using another stairway. The reservoir had an enormous capacity of 1,140,000 US gallons (4,300 cubic meters). One of these chambers is 850 feet (260 meters) long, 33 feet (10 meters) deep and 6-13 feet (2-4 meters) wide.

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## Abraham

**(c. 1800 BCE - c. 1625 BCE)**

According to Jewish tradition, Abraham was born under the name Abram in the city of Ur in Babylonia in the year 1948 from Creation (circa 1800 BCE). He was the son of Terach, an idol merchant, but from his early childhood, he questioned the faith of his father and sought the truth. He came to believe that the entire universe was the work of a single Creator, and he began to teach this belief to others.

Abram tried to convince his father, Terach, of the folly of idol worship. One day, when Abram was left alone to mind the store, he took a hammer and smashed all of the idols except the largest one. He placed the hammer in the hand of the largest idol. When his father returned and asked what happened, Abram said, "The idols got into a fight, and the big one smashed all the other ones." His father said, "Don't be ridiculous. These idols have no life or power. They can't do anything." Abram replied, "Then why do you worship them?"

Eventually, the one true Creator that Abram had worshipped called to him, and made him an offer: if Abram would leave his home and his family, then [G-d](#) would make him a great nation and bless him. Abram accepted this offer, and the *b'rit* (covenant) between G-d and the Jewish people was established. ([Gen. 12](#)).

The idea of *b'rit* is fundamental to traditional Judaism: we have a covenant, a contract, with G-d, which involves rights and obligations on both sides. We have certain obligations to G-d, and G-d has certain obligations to us. The terms of this *b'rit* became more explicit over time, until the time of the

Giving of the [Torah](#). Abram was subjected to ten tests of faith to prove his worthiness for this covenant. Leaving his home is one of these trials.

Abram, raised as a city-dweller, adopted a nomadic lifestyle, traveling through what is now the land of Israel for many years. G-d promised this land to Abram's descendants. Abram is referred to as a Hebrew (*Ivri*), possibly because he was descended from Eber or possibly because he came from the "other side" (*eber*) of the Euphrates River.

But Abram was concerned, because he had no children and he was growing old. Abram's beloved wife, [Sarai](#), knew that she was past child-bearing years, so she offered her maidservant, Hagar, as a wife to Abram. This was a common practice in the region at the time. According to tradition, Hagar was a daughter of Pharaoh, given to Abram during his travels in Egypt. She bore Abram a son, Ishmael, who, according to both Muslim and Jewish tradition, is the ancestor of the Arabs. ([Gen 16](#))

When Abram was 100 and Sarai 90, G-d promised Abram a son by Sarai. G-d changed Abram's name to Abraham (father of many), and Sarai's to Sarah (from "my princess" to "princess"). Sarah bore Abraham a son, Isaac (in Hebrew, Yitzchak), a name derived from the word "laughter," expressing Abraham's joy at having a son in his old age. ([Gen 17-18](#)). Isaac was the ancestor of the Jewish people.

[Abraham died at the age of 175.]

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## Hezekiah

Following the death of King Ahaz his son Hezekiah ascended the throne in [Jerusalem](#). The new monarch introduced comprehensive religious reform and introduced substantial policy changes.

Hezekiah renewed the full-scale worship of the Israelite God following a lengthy period in which idol-worship had taken root in the city: "He abolished the shrines and smashed the pillars and cut down the sacred post. He also broke into pieces the bronze serpent which [Moses](#) had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it" ([2 Kings 18:4](#)). At the same time he renewed the tradition of the [Passover](#) pilgrimage in its full scope, and for the first time since the kingdom had split, under Rehoboam son of [Solomon](#), the remnants of the [tribes of Israel](#), those who had not gone into the [Assyrian](#) exile, were invited to take part in the most sumptuous festival which had been seen for many generations. Hezekiah took advantage of the festival to consolidate his religious reforms and to return the people to the worship of God: "A great crowd assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very great congregation. They set to and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem, and they removed all the incense stands and threw them into Wadi Kidron...There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for since the time of King Solomon son of David of Israel nothing like it had happened in Jerusalem" ([2 Chronicles 30:13, 26](#)).

At the same time Hezekiah revised the political approach of his father Ahaz, appealing to Egypt to halt the Assyrian expansion. His pragmatic approach was scornfully criticized by the [prophet Isaiah](#), who was very active and highly influential in Jerusalem during this period: "Ha! Those



who go down to Egypt for help and rely upon horses! They have put their trust in abundance of chariots, in vast numbers of riders, and they have not turned to the Holy One of Israel, they have not sought the Lord" ([Isaiah 31:1](#)).

The prophet's theopolitical approach claimed that the Assyrian conquests were no more than a sign and an omen to the people to resume the worship of God with a full heart, and that any attempt to rely on "earthly" military help was doomed to failure. For the same reason he rejected the efforts to form an alliance with Babylon ([2 Kings 18](#)). Hezekiah also made concrete preparations for the Assyrian siege that Sennacherib finally laid on Jerusalem in 701 BCE, some 20 years after his predecessor, Tiglath-pileser, had ravaged the northern Kingdom of Israel. In an impressive engineering feat a tunnel 533 meters long was dug in order to provide underground access to the waters of the Gihon Spring, which lay outside the city: "When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, intent on making war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officers and warriors about stopping the flow of the springs outside the city, and they supported him. A large force was assembled to stop up all the springs and the wadi that flowed through the land, for otherwise, they thought, the King of Assyria would come and find water in abundance "([2 Chronicles 32:2-4](#)).

Adventurous visitors to Jerusalem can still explore this 2700-year-old technological wonder. In the [Siloam Tunnel](#), which was dug from two different directions in order to speed up the work in the face of the advancing enemy, we find the "[Siloam inscription](#)," which commemorates the meeting of the two teams. At the same time, a wall was built around the Siloam Pool, into which the spring waters were channeled; the wall continued westward and surrounded the city, which at this time expanded to the slopes of Mount Zion. An impressive vestige of this structure, the building of which is described in [Isaiah 22:11](#), is the [broad wall](#) in the [Jewish Quarter](#) of the [Old City of Jerusalem](#). Miraculously, the city was spared the siege, although a realistic explanation was also offered for this development.

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## Isaiah

**(c. 740-681 BCE)**

The prophetic vision that affirmed principles of absolute justice and morality emerged in the [Jerusalem of the First Temple period](#). This, together with the traditions related to the genesis of the three monotheistic faiths, transformed [Jerusalem](#) into a major city in the history of human civilization. The prophets emphasized the concept of historical linearity, which maintains that the flawed present, with its rampant suffering and injustice, will ultimately undergo a radical metamorphosis, and that finally absolute justice, peace, harmony, and spiritual awareness will prevail. It was in Jerusalem that people first lifted their eyes toward a more hopeful future.

A paramount shaper of the prophetic vision was Isaiah, who was active over an extraordinarily lengthy period of time: "The prophecies of Isaiah son of Amoz, who prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and [Hezekiah](#), kings of Judah" ([Isaiah 1:1](#)).

Isaiah was witness to one of the most turbulent periods in Jerusalem's history, from both the political and the religious standpoint. His status enabled him to take an active part in events, and in some cases to guide them. His relations with the senior members of the royal house, as described in the Bible, and the fact that he had free access to the palace, together with the complex linguistic style of his prophecies, suggest that he belonged to the Jerusalem aristocracy. This, though, did not prevent him from being an outspoken mouthpiece of the common people, who were being victimized by the rampant corruption of the ruling class: "What need have I of all your sacrifices? says the Lord... Put your evil doings away

from my sight... Devote yourselves to justice;... Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow"([1:11-17](#)).

Isaiah was the most "political" of the prophets. In the face of [Assyrian](#) expansionism he counseled a passive political and military approach. He put his faith in divine salvation, which would certainly follow from a necessary change in the moral leadership and in the people's spiritual tenacity. Every "earthly" attempt to alter the course of events was foredoomed, since the mighty Assyria was no more than a "rod" in God's hands with which to punish the sins of Jerusalem: "Again the Lord spoke to me, thus: 'Because that people has spurned the gently flowing waters of Siloam assuredly, my Lord will bring up against them the mighty, massive waters of the Euphrates, the king of Assyria and all his multitude" ([8:6-7](#)). When the comprehensive religious reforms introduced by [King Hezekiah](#) seemed, at first, to justify the hopes held out for him by Isaiah, the prophet supported him in the difficult moments of the Assyrian siege: "Assuredly, thus said the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not enter this city; he shall not shoot an arrow at it, or advance upon it with a shield, or pile up a siege mound against us. He shall go back by the way he came, he shall not enter this city declares the Lord"([37:33-34](#)).

However, Isaiah took an unwaveringly dim view of Hezekiah's attempts to forge alliances with Egypt and with the envoys of the [Babylonian](#) king Merodach-baladan, as a wedge against Assyrian expansionism. Such efforts, he said, attested to insufficient faith in the Lord. Isaiah is also considered the most universal of the prophets: "In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's House shall stand firm above the mountains... And the many peoples shall go and shall say: Come, let us go up to the Mount of the Lord ... "([2:2-3](#)). Christian theologians have drawn heavily on Isaiah's prophecies for exegetical purposes.

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## Isaac

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Isaac was the subject of the tenth and most difficult test of [Abraham's](#) faith: [G-d](#) commanded [Abraham](#) to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. ([Gen 22](#)). This test is known in Jewish tradition as the Akeidah (the Binding, a reference to the fact that Isaac was bound on the altar).

But this test is also an extraordinary demonstration of Isaac's own faith, because according to Jewish tradition, Isaac knew that he was to be sacrificed, yet he did not resist, and was united with his father in dedication.

At the last moment, G-d sent an angel to stop the sacrifice. It is interesting to note that child sacrifice was a common practice in the region at the time. Thus, to people of the time, the surprising thing about this story is not the fact that G-d asked [Abraham](#) to sacrifice his child, but that G-d stopped him!

[Judaism](#) uses this story as evidence that G-d abhors human sacrifice. In fact, I have seen some sources indicating that [Abraham](#) *failed* this test of faith because he did not refuse to sacrifice his son! Judaism has always strongly opposed the practice of human sacrifice, commonplace in many other cultures at that time and place.

Isaac later married [Rebecca](#) (Rivka), who bore him fraternal twin sons: [Jacob](#) (Ya'akov) and Esau. ([Gen 25](#)).

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Source: [Judaism 101](#)

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## Jacob

[Isaac's](#) wife Rebecca (Rivka) gave birth to fraternal twin sons: Jacob (Ya'akov) and Esau. The two brothers were at war with each other even before they were born. They struggled within Rebecca's womb. Esau was Isaac's favorite, because he was a good hunter, but the more spiritually-minded Jacob was Rebecca's favorite.

Esau had little regard for the spiritual heritage of his forefathers, and sold his birthright of spiritual leadership to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew. When Isaac was growing old, Rebecca tricked him into giving Jacob a blessing meant for Esau. Esau was angry about this, and about the birthright, so Jacob fled to live with his uncle, where he met his beloved Rachel. Jacob was deceived into marrying Rachel's older sister, Leah, but later married Rachel as well, and Rachel and Leah's maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah. Between these four women, Jacob fathered 12 sons and one daughter.

After many years living with and working for his uncle/father-in-law, Jacob returned to his homeland and sought reconciliation with his brother Esau. He prayed to [G-d](#) and gave his brother gifts. The night before he went to meet his brother, he sent his wives, sons, and things across the river, and was alone with [G-d](#). That night, he wrestled with a man until the break of day. As the dawn broke, Jacob demanded a blessing from the man, and the "man" revealed himself as an angel. He blessed Jacob and gave him the name "Israel" (Yisrael), meaning "the one who wrestled with G-d" or "the Champion of G-d." The Jewish people are generally referred to as the Children of Israel, signifying our descent from Jacob. The next day, Jacob met Esau and was welcomed by him.

## Children of Israel



Jacob fathered 12 sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin. They are the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and the ones for whom the tribes are named. Joseph is the father of two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.

Joseph's older brothers were jealous of him, because he was the favorite of their father, and because he had visions that he would lead them all. They sold Joseph into slavery and convinced their father that Joseph was dead. Joseph was brought into Egypt, where his ability to interpret visions earned him a place in the Pharaoh's court, paving the way for his family's later settlement in Egypt.

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## Joseph

**By Shira Schoenberg**

The biblical Joseph was the 11<sup>th</sup> son of [Jacob](#). He was born to Jacob's favorite wife, [Rachel](#), in Paddan-Aram after she had been barren for seven years. Joseph fathered two of the [twelve tribes](#) of Israel: Ephraim and Manasseh. Information about Joseph is found in [Genesis](#) chapters 37-50.

At the age of 17, Joseph was a shepherd alongside his brothers. Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons. Joseph would report his brothers' misdeeds to his father and Jacob gave Joseph a "coat of many colors." The other brothers were jealous of Joseph and hated him. Joseph only further provoked this hatred when he told his brothers about two of his dreams. In the first, sheaves of wheat belonging to his brothers bowed to his own sheaf. In the second, the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowed to him.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to check on his brothers. Joseph went to Shechem and, when his brothers were not there, followed them to Dothan. When the brothers saw him, they plotted to kill him and throw him into a pit. The oldest brother, Reuben, suggested that they merely throw Joseph into the pit, so Reuben could secretly save Joseph later. When Joseph approached, the brothers took his coat and threw him into the pit. They sat down to eat and saw a caravan of Ishmaelite traders from Gilead in the distance. Judah came up with the idea to sell Joseph into slavery. Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver. The brothers then dipped his coat into the blood of a slaughtered goat and brought it back to Jacob. Jacob recognized the coat and concluded that a beast had killed his son. He mourned for many days and was inconsolable.

Meanwhile, the traders took Joseph down to Egypt where Potiphar, an officer and head of the kitchen of Pharaoh, bought him. Joseph was successful there and Potiphar made Joseph his personal attendant, putting him in charge of the entire household.

Joseph was well built and handsome and after some time Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. She approached Joseph day after day but he refused her each time, citing loyalty to Potiphar and to God. One day, Joseph came into the house to work. Potiphar's wife grabbed his coat and he ran away. She then pretended that Joseph had tried to seduce her and slandered him first to her servants and then to her husband. Potiphar was furious and sent Joseph to a jail for the king's prisoners.

In prison, the chief jailor liked Joseph and put him in charge of all the other prisoners, including Pharaoh's butler and baker. One night both the butler and the baker had strange dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams, saying that in three days time the butler would be recalled to his former position while the baker would be killed. Sure enough, three days later, Pharaoh restored the butler to his job and killed the baker. Joseph asked the butler to mention his name to Pharaoh in the hope that he would be freed, but the butler forgot about Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh himself had two dreams that his magicians could not interpret. The butler then remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sent for the 30-year-old Joseph. He appeared before Pharaoh and told him in the name of God that the dreams forecasted seven years of plentiful crops followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh to make a wise man commissioner over the land with overseers to gather and store food from the seven years of abundance to save for the years of scarcity. Joseph's prediction and advice pleased Pharaoh and he made Joseph his second-in-command. He gave Joseph his ring and dressed him in robes of linen with a gold chain around his neck. Pharaoh gave him the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah and found him a wife named Asenath, daughter of Poti-phera the priest of On.

Joseph traveled throughout Egypt, gathering and storing enormous amounts of grain from each city. During these years, Asenath and Joseph had two sons. The first Joseph named Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget (*nashani*) completely my hardship and my parental home" ([Genesis 41:51](#)). He named the second son Ephraim, meaning, "God has made me fertile (*hiprani*) in the land of my affliction" ([Genesis 41:52](#)). After seven years, a famine spread throughout the world, and

Egypt was the only country that had food. Joseph was in charge of rationing grain to the Egyptians and to all who came to Egypt.

The famine affected Canaan and Jacob sent his 10 oldest sons to Egypt to get food, keeping only Benjamin, Rachel's second son and Jacob's youngest child, at home out of concern for his safety. Joseph's brothers came and bowed to Joseph, who recognized them immediately but pretended they were strangers. He asked them where they were from and accused them of being spies. They denied his claim but he continued to speak harshly to them and interrogate them. They told him they had a younger brother at home. Joseph then locked them in the guardhouse for three days before commanding the brothers to go home and bring their youngest brother back with them to prove that they were telling the truth. The brothers spoke among themselves lamenting that they were being punished for what they had done to Joseph, who overheard them, turned away and wept, but then continued his act. He gave them grain and provisions for the journey, secretly returned their money and kept Simeon in jail pending their return.

The brothers returned to Canaan and told Jacob all that had happened in Egypt. They asked Jacob to send Benjamin down with them but he refused, "Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you would take away Benjamin" ([Genesis 42:36](#)). Even Reuben's offer that Jacob could kill Reuben's two sons if Benjamin did not return safely did not move Jacob. Eventually, they finished the rations from Egypt and the famine became so severe that Jacob no longer had a choice. Judah told Jacob to send Benjamin in his care and if Benjamin did not return, "I shall stand guilty before you forever" ([Genesis 43:9](#)) So Jacob sent the brothers back to Egypt with Benjamin, along with a gift for Joseph and double the necessary money to repay the money that was returned to them.

When the brothers arrived, Joseph brought them to the entrance of his house and instructed his servant to prepare a meal. The brothers were scared and told Joseph they did not know how the money got back in their bags. Joseph replied that their God must have put it there because he received their payment. The brothers then went inside and waited for Joseph to come eat with them. When he returned, they gave him the gifts and bowed to him. He asked about their father, and they responded that he was well, and bowed a second time. He asked if Benjamin was their brother, and left the room, overcome with emotion after seeing his brother again. He then returned and ate and drank with his brothers, giving Benjamin more food than the others. He then instructed his servant to fill

the brothers' bags with food, return each one's money a second time, and put his own silver goblet in Benjamin's bag.

As soon as the brothers left the city, Joseph's servant overtook them and accused them of stealing Joseph's goblet. He said that whoever had the goblet in his possession would be kept as a slave, while the others would go free. He searched their possessions and found the goblet in Benjamin's bag. All the brothers returned to the city and threw themselves on the ground before Joseph. Judah expressed their willingness to become Joseph's slave. Joseph answered that only the one in whose possession the goblet was found would become a slave. Judah then pleaded with Joseph, telling him of Jacob's reluctance to send Benjamin and of his own responsibility for Benjamin. He told of the sorrow that would overtake Jacob if Benjamin did not return. At this point, Joseph could not longer control himself. He sent away all of his attendants, began to cry loudly and revealed his true identity to his brothers.

Joseph's first query was about his father, but the brothers were too shocked to answer. He reassured them that it was God's providence that sent him to Egypt to ensure their survival during the famine, and he was not angry with them. He sent them back with instructions to tell Jacob what had become of Joseph and to bring Jacob and his household to the nearby town of Goshen where Joseph could care for them during the next five years of famine. He then embraced Benjamin, kissed all of his brothers and wept.

Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come and told them to bring their households to Egypt where he would give them the best of the land. Joseph gave each of them a wagon, provisions for the trip and a change of clothing. He gave Benjamin 300 pieces of silver and several changes of clothing. He also sent a large present back for his father.

At first Jacob did not believe that Joseph was alive. After he saw the wagons that Joseph sent, however, he realized it was true. Then Jacob, at age 130, set out for Goshen with the 70 members of his household. He sent Judah ahead of him so Joseph knew that his father was coming. Joseph went to meet him and they embraced and cried. Joseph told Pharaoh that his brothers and father had arrived. The brothers informed Pharaoh that they were shepherds and Pharaoh put them in charge of his livestock. They lived in the best part of Egypt, in Rameses, and Joseph provided them with bread.

As the famine continued, the Egyptians eventually ran out of money. They



begged Joseph for food and he gave them bread in exchange for their animals. After a year, their animals were gone and Joseph made a new deal with the people. He gave them seed to plant on their farms and in exchange they gave Pharaoh one-fifth of their crops. He nationalized all farmland except that belonging to the priests, and turned the people into serfs.

After Jacob had lived in Egypt for 17 years, he called Joseph to him and made him swear that when Jacob died, Joseph would not bury him in Egypt, but would take him to the burial place of his fathers. Joseph swore to this. Soon after, Joseph was told that his father was sick. He brought his two sons to Jacob. Jacob assured Joseph that he would consider Ephraim and Manasseh to be his sons just like Reuben and Simeon were when it came to the inheritance that God had promised Jacob's offspring. Jacob then blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. Although Manasseh was the first-born, Jacob put his right hand, the stronger hand, on Ephraim's head. When Joseph corrected him, Jacob said he did it on purpose and predicted that Ephraim would surpass Manasseh in greatness. Jacob told Joseph that he was about to die, but reassured him that God would be with him. He also assigned him an extra portion of his inheritance, a privilege usually given to the first-born.

Jacob blessed all of his sons, giving the longest blessing to Joseph. He instructed them to bury him in the [cave of Machpelah](#), and then he died. Joseph flung himself at his father, cried and kissed him. Joseph then ordered his physicians to embalm Jacob. The Egyptians mourned for 70 days. Joseph received permission to go to Canaan to bury Jacob. He took his brothers and his father's household, along with all of Pharaoh's officials and dignitaries, and left Egypt in a large group. When they came to Goren ha-Atad, he observed a seven-day mourning period. Joseph and his brothers then continued to the cave of Machpelah where they buried Jacob. They then returned to Egypt.

Once Jacob was dead, the brothers were scared that Joseph would take revenge on them for selling him. They sent a message to Joseph saying that before his death Jacob had instructed them to tell Joseph to forgive them. They then offered to be his slaves. Joseph reassured them, saying that God intended for Joseph to go down to Egypt to ensure the survival of many people, and Joseph would take care of them and their children. So Joseph, his brothers and his father's household remained in Egypt.

Joseph lived 110 years. He saw great-grandchildren from both his sons. Before he died, he told his brothers that God would one day bring them up



from Egypt into the land that God promised their fathers. He made them swear to carry his bones out of Egypt into that land. Joseph died and was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

When the Jews eventually left Egypt, [Moses](#) carried out Joseph's bones. Joseph was buried in Shechem, on a piece of land that Jacob had previously bought. Joseph's two sons both became tribes in Israel and the northern Israelite kingdom is many times referred to as the "House of Joseph."

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## Joshua

By David Shyovitz

Joshua ben Nun, of the [tribe](#) of Ephraim, was the second person to lead the Jewish people in their early history. He spent the early part of his life training under [Moses](#), and took over for him when the Israelites entered the land of [Canaan](#). Joshua's charisma and skill as a leader are evident from the success of the Jews during his lifetime, and their rapid decline following his death. Indeed, not until Samuel's reign hundreds of years later do the Israelites find a comparable leader.

The first appearance of Joshua in the [Bible](#) is in [Exodus 17](#), where he is called Hosea. When the Israelites are attacked by the [Amalekites](#) immediately after their crossing of the Red Sea, it is Hosea who leads the counter-attack. He defeats the enemy, and subsequently becomes [Moses's](#) assistant and protege. He is next mentioned at Sinai, where he waits diligently at the edge of the mountain for Moses to descend; thus, unlike the other members of his tribe, Hosea was not involved in the sin of the Golden Calf. Hosea also accompanied Moses when he went to the Tent of Meeting for the remaining years in the desert.

Hosea's most notable exploit in the [Torah](#) takes place during the episode of the spies in [Numbers 13-14](#). He is chosen to represent the tribe of Ephraim among the group of twelve leaders who travel to [Canaan](#) to scout out the land. Upon returning from their mission, the spies unanimously

praise the land; ten of them, however, add that it will be impossible to conquer, and that it in fact "eats its inhabitants." Joshua and Caleb ben Jephunneh dissent, and try to no avail to convince the Jews that God will indeed give them the land. Because the Jews believed the report of the ten libelous spies, God waits forty years before leading the Israelites into the land; by that point, the entire generation that believed the bad reports about Canaan has died with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

It is also during the episode of the spies that Hosea's name is changed to Joshua. According to [midrashic](#) sources, [Moses](#) foresaw the disaster that would occur when the spies returned, and gave his apprentice moral support by adding the name of God to his name, changing Hosea ("saves") into Joshua ("God saves").

As Moses's death draws near, Joshua is chosen to be his successor. The [Pentateuch](#) ends with the Israelites on the verge of crossing the Jordan into the land of [Canaan](#), and the first book of the [Prophets](#), which is named after [Joshua](#), picks up where the Torah left off. Immediately, Joshua demonstrates a duality within his character that was missing from that of Moses. While Moses was primarily a spiritual leader, who acted as an intermediary between God and the Jews, Joshua was a capable military commander as well as a religious leader. By capturing the city of [Jericho](#), and, eventually, the rest of the land of [Canaan](#), Joshua shows that his leadership is different from that of Moses. Indeed, his new role reflects the new reality that the Israelites encounter in their new homeland: In the desert, where their needs were provided for by God in a steady flow of miracles, a purely spiritual leader was sufficient. Now, with their destiny in their own hands, the Jews need a more practical, physically capable leader.

Of course, the book of Joshua emphasizes the role that God played in the leader's victories. In the account of one battle (in [Joshua 10](#)), for example, the Torah reports that as evening approached, the Jews were winning and wanted to finish the battle, so that their enemy would have no chance to regroup. Thus, God caused the sun to stand still, allowing the Jews to finish the battle and avoid having to fight another one.

The battle of [Jericho](#), the Israelites' first, is won by surrounding the walls of the city and walking around them, causing them to miraculously collapse. Once in the city, they kill all of the inhabitants but the family of Rahab, the harlot who housed the spies that scouted out the city in [Joshua](#)

1. According to [midrash](#), Joshua eventually married Rahab, and the [prophets Jeremiah](#) and Hulda were their descendents; however, there is no actual report in the book of Joshua of the leader marrying anyone, or having any family life whatsoever.

From Jericho, the nation proceeds to Ai, and then to the rest of [Canaan](#). According to [midrash](#), however, the forcible conquest and bloody battles reported in the rest of the book are only part of the story. When approaching a city, the residents were given the choice of leaving unharmed, making peace, or declaring war. Several tribes, such as the Gibeonites, took advantage of this policy, made peace, and were later defended by the Jews when attacked by the tribes who had chosen to make war ([Joshua 9-10](#)).

For whatever reason, Joshua, unlike Moses, does not appoint a successor as his death approaches. As a result of the leadership vacuum, the Israelites begin to sin not long after Joshua's death. Rather than completing the conquest, they live together with the land's previous inhabitants, and allow themselves to be swayed by their neighbors' pagan beliefs. Thus begins a long period in which the Jews sin, are oppressed by neighboring countries, are saved by a leader (or "[judge](#)"), rededicate themselves to God, and eventually sin again. The entire book of [Judges](#) details this cycle, and it is not till the founding of the [Davidic](#) dynasty in [I Kings](#) that the nation has permanent leadership once again.

Interestingly, [Christianity](#) has attributed to Joshua a role that [Judaism](#) has not. The similarity of the name Yehoshua (the Hebrew version of Joshua) to Yeshua ([Jesus](#)'s Hebrew name) led Christian theologists to view Joshua as a precursor of Jesus. Thus, Joshua's crossing of the Jordan is mirrored by Jesus' baptism in it; Joshua's military campaigns foreshadow Jesus's battles with Satan; and Joshua's succession of Moses symbolizes the end put to Mosaic law by Jesus.

Additionally, Joshua has been a frequent subject of artistic expression. Numerous classic paintings depict the battle of [Jericho](#), as do several epic poems and an Oratorio by George Frederic Handel.

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Source: [Encyclopedia Judaica](#), "Joshua."

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## Moses

Along with God, it is the figure of Moses (*Moshe*) who dominates the [Torah](#). Acting at God's behest, it is he who leads the Jews out of slavery, unleashes the Ten Plagues against Egypt, guides the freed slaves for forty years in the wilderness, carries down the law from Mount Sinai, and prepares the Jews to enter the land of Canaan. Without Moses, there would be little apart from laws to write about in the last four books of the Torah.

Moses is born during the Jewish enslavement in Egypt, during a terrible period when Pharaoh decrees that all male Hebrew infants are to be drowned at birth. His mother, Yocheved, desperate to prolong his life, floats him in a basket in the Nile. Hearing the crying child as she walks by, Pharaoh's daughter pities the crying infant and adopts him ([Exodus 2:1-10](#)). It surely is no coincidence that the Jews' future liberator is raised as an Egyptian prince. Had Moses grown up in slavery with his fellow Hebrews, he probably would not have developed the pride, vision, and courage to lead a revolt.

The Torah records only three incidents in Moses' life before God appoints him a prophet. As a young man, outraged at seeing an Egyptian overseer beating a Jewish slave, he kills the overseer. The next day, he tries to make peace between two Hebrews who are fighting, but the aggressor takes umbrage and says: "Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses immediately understands that he is in danger, for though his high status undoubtedly would protect him from punishment for the murder of a mere overseer, the fact that he killed the man for carrying out his duties to Pharaoh would brand him a rebel against the king. Indeed, Pharaoh orders Moses killed, and he flees to Midian. At this point, Moses probably wants nothing more than a peaceful interlude, but immediately he finds himself



in another fight. The seven daughters of the Midianite priest Reuel (also called Jethro) are being abused by the Midianite male shepherds, and Moses rises to their defense ([Exodus 2:11-22](#)).

The incidents are of course related. In all three, Moses shows a deep, almost obsessive commitment to fighting injustice. Furthermore, his concerns are not parochial. He intervenes when a non-Jew oppresses a Jew, when two Jews fight, and when non-Jews oppress other non-Jews.

Moses marries Tzipporah, one of the Midianite priest's daughters, and becomes the shepherd for his father-in-law's flock. On one occasion, when he has gone with his flock into the wilderness, an angel of the Lord appears to him in the guise of a bush that is burning but is not consumed (see next entry). The symbolism of the miracle is powerful. In a world in which nature itself is worshiped, God shows that He rules over it.

Once He has so effectively elicited Moses' attention, God commands-over Moses' strenuous objections-that he go to Egypt and along with his brother, Aaron, make one simple if revolutionary demand of Pharaoh: "Let my people go." Pharaoh resists Moses' petition, until God wreaks the Ten Plagues on Egypt, after which the children of Israel escape.

Months later, in the Sinai Desert, Moses climbs Mount Sinai and comes down with the [Ten Commandments](#), only to discover the Israelites engaged in an orgy and worshiping a Golden Calf. The episode is paradigmatic: Only at the very moment God or Moses is doing something for them are they loyal believers. The instant God's or Moses' presence is not manifest, the children of Israel revert to amoral, immoral, and sometimes idolatrous behavior. Like a true parent, Moses rages at the Jews when they sin, but he never turns against them-even when God does. To God's wrathful declaration on one occasion that He will blot out the Jews and make of Moses a new nation, he answers, "Then blot me out too" (Exodus 32:32).

The law that Moses transmits to the Jews in the Torah embraces far more than the [Ten Commandments](#). In addition to many ritual regulations, the Jews are instructed to love God as well as be in awe of Him, to love their neighbors as themselves, and to love the stranger-that is, the non-Jew living among them-as themselves as well.

The saddest event in Moses' life might well be God's prohibiting him from entering the land of Israel. The reason for this ban is explicitly connected

to an episode in Numbers in which the Hebrews angrily demand that Moses supply them with water. God commands Moses to assemble the community, "and before their very eyes *order* the [nearby] rock to yield its water." Fed up with the Hebrews' constant whining and complaining, he says to them instead: "Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?" He then strikes the rock twice with his rod, and water gushes out ([Numbers 20:2-13](#)). It is this episode of disobedience, striking the rock instead of speaking to it, that is generally offered as the explanation for why God punishes Moses and forbids him to enter Israel. The punishment, however, seems so disproportionate to the offense, that the real reason for God's prohibition must go deeper. Most probably, as Dr. Jacob Milgrom, professor of Bible at the University of California, Berkeley, has suggested (elaborating on earlier comments of Rabbi Hananael, Nachmanides, and the Bekhor Shor) that Moses' sin was declaring, "Shall we get water for you out of this rock?" implying that it was he and his brother, Aaron, and not God, who were the authors of the miracle. Rabbi Irwin Kula has suggested that Moses' sin was something else altogether. Numbers 14:5 records that when ten of the twelve spies returned from Canaan and gloomily predicted that the Hebrews would never be able to conquer the land, the Israelites railed against Moses. In response, he seems to have had a mini-breakdown: "Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembled congregation of the Israelites." The two independent spies, Joshua and Caleb, both of whom rejected the majority report, took over "and exhorted the whole Israelite community" ([Numbers 14:7](#)). Later, in Deuteronomy, when Moses delivers his final summing-up to the Israelites, he refers back to this episode: "When the Lord heard your loud complaint, He was angry. He vowed: "Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, none except Caleb.... Because of you, the Lord was incensed with me too, and He said: You shall not enter it either. Joshua ... who attends you, he shall enter it" (1:34-38).

Despite these two sad episodes, Moses impressed his monotheistic vision upon the Jews with such force that in the succeeding three millennia, Jews have never confused the messenger with the Author of the message. As Princeton philosopher Walter Kaufmann has written: "in Greece, the heroes of the past were held to have been sired by a god or to have been born of a goddess ... [and] in Egypt, the Pharaoh was considered divine." But despite the extraordinary veneration accorded Moses — "there has not arisen a prophet since like Moses" is the Bible's verdict ([Deuteronomy 34:10](#)) — no Jewish thinker ever thought he was anything other than a man. See *And No One Knows His Burial Place to This Day*.

[SOURCES AND FURTHER READINGS](#): The Kaufmann quote is found in his *Religions in Four Dimensions*, p. 43. For an analysis of Moses' three fights against injustice, see Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot: The Book of Exodus*, pp. 39-48. Milgrom's explanation of Moses' punishment is found in his *The JPS Torah Commentary, Numbers*, p. 452. See also Martin Buber, *Moses*; Aaron Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader*; Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*; Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Images of Moses*.

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# The Birth and Evolution of Judaism: Introduction

The Hebrew religion gave us monotheism; it gave us the concept of rule by law; it gave us the concept that the divine works its purpose on human history through human events; it gave us the concept of the covenant, that the one god has a special relationship to a community of humans above all others. In the West, in the Middle East, in most of Africa and Asia, the legacy of Hebrew religion permeates nearly everything you see.

The Hebrew religion, so important and far-reaching in its influence on human culture, did not spring up overnight. Along with the Hebrew history, the development of Hebrew religion was a long and rocky road. Major shifts in the Hebrew fate inspired revolutions in the religion itself; it wasn't until sometime after the [Exilic period](#) that the central document of Hebrew faith, the [Torah](#), took its final and orthodox shape.

Through archaeology and through analysis of the Hebrew scriptures, scholars have divided the development of the Hebrew religion into four main periods:

### [The Pre-Mosaic Stage](#)

The Hebrew faith is marked by possible polytheism and animistic practices; it is generally believed that the introduction of Yahweh worship and monolatry occurs during the migration from Egypt.

### [National Monolatry and Monotheism](#)

The Hebrews adopt a single, local god as their god; eventually this religion evolves into a monotheistic

religion.

### [The Prophetic Revolution](#)

The cultural shock of the monarchy inspires a radically new religion under the intellectual leadership of a few "prophets" or "prophetic" writers.

### [Post-Exilic Revolution](#)

The disaster of the [Exile](#) led to a radical rethinking of the Yahweh religion and the elevation of the [Torah](#) as the single, unsullied law for the Hebrews.

In the dimmest beginnings of Hebrew history, we can barely glimpse the original Hebrew religion. However, we'll begin our journey in the mystery at the beginning of Jewish history.

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## The Birth and Evolution of Judaism: The Pre-Mosaic Stage

(~1950-1300 BC)

Little or nothing can be known for certain about the nature of Hebrew worship before [the migration from Egypt](#). In Hebrew history, [Abraham](#) is already worshipping a figure called "Elohim," which is the plural for "lord." This figure is also called "El Shaddai" ("God the Mountaineer (?)," translated as "God Almighty"), and a couple other variants. The name of God, Yahweh, isn't learned by the Hebrews until [Moses](#) hears the name spoken by [God](#) on Mount Sinai. This god requires animal sacrifices and regular expiation. He intrudes on human life with astonishing suddenness, and often demands absurd acts from humans. The proper human relationship to this god is obedience, and the early history of humanity is a history of humans oscillating between obedience to this god and autonomy. This god is anthropomorphic: he has human qualities. He is frequently angered and seems to have some sort of human body. In addition, the god worshipped by Abraham and his descendants is the creator god, that is, the god solely responsible for the creation of the universe. The god of [Genesis](#) is bisexual: he/she is often referred to in female as well as male terms. For instance, this god is represented frequently as "mothering" or "giving birth through labor pains" to the world and humans (these passages are universally mistranslated in English as "fathering"—this god is only referred to as a "father" twice in *Genesis*). In *Genesis*, Elohim or El Shaddai functions as a primitive law-giver; after the Flood, this god gives to Noah those primitive laws which apply to all human beings, the so-called [Noahide Laws](#). Nothing of the sophistication and comprehensive of the Mosaic laws is evident in the



early history of the human relationship to Yahweh as outlined in *Genesis* .

Scholars have wracked their brains trying to figure out what conclusions might be drawn about this human history. In general, they believe that the portrait of Hebrew religion in *Genesis* is an inaccurate one. They conclude instead that Hebrew monolatry and monotheism began with the Yahweh cult introduced, according to [Exodus](#), in the migration from Egypt between 1300 and 1200 BC. The text of *Genesis* in their view is an attempt to legitimate the occupation of Palestine by asserting a covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the Hebrews that had been established far in the distant past.

All these conclusions are brilliant but tentative, for we'll never know for sure much of anything substantial about Hebrew history and religion during [the age of the patriarchs](#) or the sojourn in Egypt. Nevertheless, scholars draw on the text of *Genesis* to conclude the following controversial ideas about early Hebrew religion:

- Early Hebrew religion was **polytheistic**; the curious plural form of the name of God, Elohim rather than El, leads them to believe that the original Hebrew religion involved several gods. This plural form, however, can be explained as a "royal" plural. Several other aspects of the account of Hebrew religion in *Genesis* also imply a polytheistic faith.
- The earliest Hebrew religion was **animistic**, that is, the Hebrews seemed worship forces of nature that dwelled in natural objects.
- As a result, much of early Hebrew religion had a number of practices that fall into the category of **magic**: scapegoat sacrifice and various forms of imitative magic, all of which are preserved in the text of *Genesis* .
- Early Hebrew religion eventually became **anthropomorphic**, that is, god or the gods took human forms; in later Hebrew religion, Yahweh becomes a figure that transcends the human and material worlds. Individual tribes probably worshipped different gods; there is no evidence in *Genesis* that anything like a national God existed in the time of the patriarchs.

The most profound revolution in Hebrew thought, though, occurred in the migration from Egypt, and its great innovator was [Moses](#). In the epic events surrounding the flight from Egypt and the settling of the promised land, Hebrew religion became permanently and irrevocably, the **Mosaic** religion.

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# The Birth and Evolution of Judaism: National Monolatry and Monotheism

(~1300-1000 BC)

According to Hebrew history narrated in [Exodus](#), the second book of the [Torah](#), the Hebrews became a nation and adopted a national god on the slopes of Mount Sinai in southern Arabia. While we know nothing whatsoever of Hebrew life in Egypt, the flight from Egypt is described in Hebrew history with immense and powerful detail. The migration itself creates a new entity in history: the Israelites; *Exodus* is the first place in the *Torah* which refers to the Hebrews as a single national group, the "bene yisrael," or "children of Israel."

The flight from Egypt itself stands as the single greatest sign from Yahweh that the Israelites were the chosen people of Yahweh; it is the event to be always remembered as demonstrating Yahweh's purpose for the Hebrew people. It is the point in history that the scattered tribes descended from [Abraham](#) become a single unit, a single nation. It is also the crucial point in history that the Hebrews adopt Yahweh as their national god.

Hebrew history is absolutely silent about Hebrew worship during the sojourn in Egypt. A single religious observance, the observation of [Passover](#), originates in Egypt immediately before the migration. This observance commemorates how Yahweh spared the Hebrews when he destroyed all the first born sons in the land of Egypt. The Yahweh religion itself, however, is learned when the mass of Hebrews collect at Mount Sinai in Midian, which is located in the southern regions of the Arabian

peninsula. During this period, called the **Sinai pericope**, Moses teaches the Hebrews the name of their god and brings to them the laws that the Hebrews, as the chosen people, must observe. The Sinai pericope is a time of legislation and of cultural formation in the Hebrew view of history. In the main, the Hebrews learn all the cultic practices and observances that they are to perform for Yahweh.

Scholars are in bitter disagreement over the origin of the the Yahweh religion and the identity of its founder, [Moses](#). While Moses is an Egyptian name, the religion itself comes from Midian. In the account, [Moses](#) lives for a time with a Midianite priest, Jethro, at the foot of Mount Sinai. The Midianites seem to have a Yahweh religion already in place; they worship the god of Mount Sinai as a kind of powerful nature deity. So it's possible that the Hebrews picked up the Yahweh religion from another group of Semites and that this Yahweh religion slowly developed into the central religion of the Hebrews. All scholars are agreed, however, that the process was slow and painful. In the Hebrew history, all during the migration and for two centuries afterwards, the Hebrews follow many various religions unevenly.

The Mosaic religion was initially a **monolatrous** religion; while the Hebrews are enjoined to worship no deity but Yahweh, there is no evidence that the earliest Mosaic religion denied the existence of other gods. In fact, the account of the migration contains numerous references by the historical characters to other gods, and the first law of the Decalogue is, after all, that no gods be put *before* Yahweh, not that no other gods exist. While controversial among many people, most scholars have concluded that the initial Mosaic religion for about two hundred years was a monolatrous religion. For there is ample evidence in the Hebrew account of the settlement of Palestine, that the Hebrews frequently changed religions, often several times in a single lifetime.

The name of god introduced in the Mosaic religion is a mysterious term. In Hebrew, the word is YHWH (there are no vowels in biblical Hebrew); we have no clue how this word is pronounced. Linguists believe that the word is related to the Semitic root of the verb, "to be," and may mean something like, "he causes to be." In English, the word is translated "I AM": "I AM THAT I AM. You will say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent you."

For a few centuries, Yahweh was largely an **anthropomorphic** god, that is, he had human qualities and physical characteristics. The Yahweh of the

Torah is frequently angry and often capricious; the entire series of plagues on Egypt, for instance, seem unreasonably cruel. In an account from the monarchical period, Yahweh strikes someone dead for touching the Ark of the Covenant; that individual, Uzza, was only touching the ark to keep it from falling over ([I Chronicles 13.10](#)).

But there are some striking innovations in this new god. First, this god, anthropomorphic or not, is conceived as operating above and outside nature and the human world. The Mosaic god is conceived as the ruler of the Hebrews, so the Mosaic laws also have the status of a ruler. The laws themselves in the Torah were probably written much later, in the eighth or seventh centuries. It is not unreasonable, however, to conclude that the early Mosaic religion was a law-based religion that imagined Yahweh as the author and enforcer of these laws. In fact, the early Hebrews seemed to have conceived of Yahweh as a kind of monarch. In addition, Yahweh is more abstract than any previous gods; one injunction to the Hebrews is that no images of Yahweh be made or worshipped. Finally, there was no afterlife in the Mosaic religion. All human and religious concerns were oriented around this world and Yahweh's purposes in this world.

As the Hebrews struggled with this new religion, lapsing frequently into other religions, they were slowly sliding towards their first major religious and ethical crisis: the monarchy. The Yahweh religion would be shaken to its roots by this crisis and would be irrevocably changed.

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## The Birth and Evolution of Judaism: The Prophetic Revolution

(~800-600 BC)

Wearied from over two centuries of sporadic conflict with indigenous peoples, broken by a ruinous civil war, and constantly threatened on all sides, the disparate Hebrew settlers of Palestine began to long for a unified state under a single monarch. Such a state would provide the organization and the military to fend off the war-like peoples surrounding them. Their desire, however, would provoke the first major crisis in the Hebrew world view: the formation of the Hebrew [monarchy](#).

In the Hebrew account of their own history, the children of Israel who settled Palestine between 1250 and 1050 BC, believed Yahweh to be their king and Yahweh's laws to be their laws (whether or not this is historically true is controversial). In desiring to have a king, the tribes of Israel were committing a grave act of disobedience towards Yahweh, for they were choosing a human being and human laws of Yahweh and Yahweh's laws. In the account of the formation of the monarchy, in the books of *Samuel*, the prophet of Yahweh, Samuel, tells the Israelites that they are committing an act of disobedience that they will dearly pay for. Heedless of Samuel's warnings, they push ahead with the monarchy. The very first monarch, Saul, sets the pattern for the rest; disobedient towards Yahweh's commands, Saul falls out with both Samuel and Yahweh and gradually slips into arbitrary despotism. This pattern—the conflict between Yahweh and the kings of Israel and Judah—becomes the historical pattern in the Hebrew stories of the **prophetic revolution**.



Whatever the causes, a group of religious leaders during the eighth and seventh centuries BC responded to the crisis created by the institution of the [monarchy](#) by reinventing and reorienting the Yahweh religion. In Hebrew, these religious reformers were called "**nivea**," or "**prophets**." The most important of these [prophets](#) were Amos, Hosea, Isaiah (who is actually three people: [Isaiah](#) and "Second Isaiah" [Deutero-Isaiah], and a third, post-exilic Isaiah), and Micah. These four, and a number of lesser prophets, are as important to the Hebrew religion as [Moses](#).

The innovations of the prophets can be grouped into three large categories:

### **Monotheism**

Whatever the character of Mosaic religion during the occupation and the early monarchy, the prophets unambiguously made Yahweh the one and only one god of the universe. Earlier, Hebrews acknowledged and even worshipped foreign gods; the prophets, however, asserted that Yahweh ruled the entire universe and all the peoples in it, whether or not they recognized and worshipped Yahweh or not. The Yahweh religion as a *monotheistic* religion can really be dated no earlier than the prophetic revolution.

### **Righteousness**

While Yahweh is subject to anger, capriciousness, and outright injustice in the earlier Mosaic religion, the Yahweh of the prophets can do nothing but good and right and justice. Yahweh becomes in the prophetic revolution a "god of righteousness"; historical events, no matter how arbitrary or unjust they may seem, represent the justice of Yahweh. The good and the just are always rewarded, and the evil are always punished. If there is any evil in the world it is through the actions of men and women, not through the actions of Yahweh, that it is committed.

### **Ethics**

While the Mosaic religion was overwhelmingly concerned with the cultic rules to be followed by the Israelites, the prophets re-centered the religion around ethics. Ritual practices, in fact, become unimportant next to ethical demands that Yahweh imposes on humans: the necessity of doing right, showing mercy, punishing evil, and doing justice.

There still, however, is no afterlife of rewards and punishments in the prophets, but a kind of House of Dust, called **Sheol**, to which all souls go after their death to abide for a time before disappearing from existence forever. There is no salvation, only the injunctions to do justice and right in order to produce a just and harmonious society.

The historical origins of these innovations are important to understand. The monarchy brought with it all the evils of a centralized state: arbitrary power, vast inequality of wealth, poverty in the midst of plenty, heavy taxation, slavery, bribery, and fear. The prophets were specifically addressing these corrupt and fearsome aspects of the Jewish state. They believed, however, that they were addressing these problems by *returning* to the Mosaic religion; in reality, they created a brand new religion, a monotheistic religion not about cultic practices, but about right and wrong.

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## The Birth and Evolution of Judaism: Post-Exilic Religion

(~800-600 BC)

The most profound spiritual and cognitive crisis in Hebrew history was the [Exile](#). Defeated by the [Chaldeans](#) under Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC, the Judaeans population was in part deported to Babylon, mainly the upper classes and craftsmen. In 586, incensed by Judaeans shifting their loyalty, Nebuchadnezzar returned, lay siege to [Jerusalem](#), and burned it down along with the [Temple](#). Nothing in the Hebrew world view had prepared them for a tragedy of this magnitude. The Hebrews had been promised the land of Palestine by their god; in addition, the [covenant](#) between Yahweh and [Abraham](#) promised Yahweh's protection. The destruction of [Jerusalem](#), the [Temple](#), and the deportation of the Judaeans, shook the Hebrew faith to its roots.

The literature of the [Exile](#) and shortly after betrays the despair and confusion of the population uprooted from its homeland. In [Lamentations](#) and various [Psalms](#), we get a profound picture of the sufferings of those left in Judaea, who coped with starvation and massive privation, and the community of Hebrews wandering Babylon. In [Job](#), a story written a century or so after the Exile, the central character suffers endless calamities— when he finally despairs of Yahweh's justice, his only answer is that Yahweh is not to be questioned.

But Hebrew religion shifted profoundly in the years of [Exile](#). A small group of religious reformers believed that the calamities suffered by the

Jews were due to the corruption of their religion and ethics. These religious reformers reoriented Jewish religion around the Mosaic books; in other words, they believed that the Jews should return to their foundational religion. While the Mosaic books had been in existence since the seventh or eighth centuries BC, they began to take final shape under the guidance of these reformers shortly after the [Exile](#). Above everything else, the [Torah](#), the five Mosaic books, represented all the law that Hebrews should follow. These laws, mainly centered around cultic practices, should remain pure and unsullied if the Jews wished to return to their homeland and keep it.

So the central character of post-Exilic Jewish religion is **reform**, an attempt to return religious and social practice back to its original character. This reform was accelerated by the return to Judaea itself; when Cyrus the Persian conquered the [Chaldeans](#) in 539, he set about re-establishing religions in their native lands. This included the Hebrew religion. Cyrus ordered [Jerusalem](#) and the [Temple](#) to be rebuilt, and in 538 BC, he sent the Judaeans home to [Jerusalem](#) *for the express purpose of worshipping Yahweh*. The reformers, then, occupied a central place in Jewish thought and life all during the [Persian](#) years (539-332 BC).

Beneath the surface, though, foreign elements creeped in to the Hebrew religion. While the reformers were busy trying to purify the Hebrew religion, the Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, crept into it among the common run of people. Why this happened is anyone's guess, but Zoroastrianism offered a world view that both explained and mollified tragedies such as the [Exile](#). It seems that the Hebrews adopted some of this world view in the face of the profound disasters they had weathered.

Zoroastrianism, which had been founded in the seventh century BC by a Persian prophet name Zarathustra (Zoroaster is his Greek name), was a **dualistic**, [eschatological](#), and **apocalyptic** religion. The universe is divided into two distinct and independent spheres. One, which is light and good, is ruled by a deity who is the principle of light and good; the other, dark and evil, is ruled by a deity who is the principle of dark and evil. The whole of human and cosmic history is an epic struggle between these two independent deities; at the end of time, a final battle between these two deities and all those ranged on one side or the other, would permanently decide the outcome of this struggle. The good deity, Ahura-Mazda, would win this final, apocalyptic battle, and all the gods and humans on the side of good would enjoy eternal bliss.

Absolutely none of these elements were present in Hebrew religion before the [Exile](#). The world is governed solely by Yahweh; evil in the world is solely the product of human actions—there is no "principle of evil" among the Hebrews before the Exile. The [afterlife](#) is simply a House of Dust called Sheol in which the soul lasts for only a brief time. There is no talk or conception of an end of time or history, or of a world beyond this one. After the [Exile](#), however, popular religion among the Judaeans and the Jews of the [Diaspora](#) include several innovations:

### **Dualism**

After the Exile, the Hebrews invent a concept of a more or less dualistic universe, in which all good and right comes from Yahweh, while all evil arises from a powerful principle of evil. Such a dualistic view of the universe helps to explain tragedies such as the Exile.

### **Eschatology and Apocalypticism**

Popular Jewish religion begins to form an elaborate theology of the end of time, in which a deliverer would defeat once and for all the forces of evil and unrighteousness.

### **Messianism**

Concurrent with the new eschatology, there is much talk of a deliverer who is called "[messiah](#)," or "anointed one." In Hebrew culture, only the head priest and the king were anointed, so this "messiah" often combined the functions of both religious and military leader.

### **Otherworldliness**

Popular Judaism adopts an elaborate after-life. Since justice does not seem to occur in this world, it is only logical that it will occur in another world. The afterlife becomes the place where good is rewarded and evil eternally punished.

While the reformers resist these innovations, they take hold among a large part of the Hebrew population. And it is from this root — the religion of the common person — that a radical form of Yahwism will grow: the

religion of [Jesus](#) of Nazareth.

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## The Amalekites

This nomadic nation was, in ancient times, Israel's eternal foe. Shortly after the Israelites left Egypt and were wondering the desert, the Amalekites attacked the weary nation, slaughtering the weak and elderly. The Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, later avenged the attack and defeated the Amalekites, but failed to completely eradicate the nation. Israel was then plagued with raids Amalekite raids. Today, the name Amalek is a symbol for evil and hatred against Jews, and Haman, the [Persian](#) leader who vowed to destroy all Jews, is considered a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.  
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## The Ammonites

After a period of nomadic existence, the Ammonites settled north of the [Moabite](#) kingdom in the 13th century [BCE](#) and founded their capital city Rabbath Ammon (present day Amman). Like their neighbors to the south, the Ammonites often attacked the newly settled Jewish empire in [Canaan](#). Similarly, after the destruction of the [First Temple](#), Ammonite king Baalis instigated the murder of Gedaliah, ensuring the downfall of the Jewish nation. The Ammonites were also involved in the [Hasmonean](#) conflict, in which Judah the [Maccabee](#) defeated Syrian and Ammonite forces.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.  
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## The Amorites

The Amorites were one of the seven nations defeated by Joshua in his conquest of [Canaan](#). The Amorites lived in southern Syria and were a militant nation, who invaded Mesopotamia at the end of the third millennium and captured [Babylon](#) soon thereafter. As they developed kingdoms on their newly conquered land, the Amorites' culture assimilated with that of mainstream Babylonia. The [Bible](#) also mentions the Amorites, saying that [Moses](#) captured two Amorite kingdoms (Heshbon and Bashan).

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.  
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## The Arameans

By far the most lasting impact the Arameans had on the Middle East was the language that, via cultural diffusion, they imprinted on the ancient middle eastern societies. The Arameans inhabited the Fertile Crescent (the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) in the 14th century [BCE](#), but did not begin seriously influencing the region until three centuries later, when they began to spread into southern Anatolia and northern Arabia, which were [Assyrian](#) territories. The Arameans were a military force until about the 9th century [BCE](#), when they fell to the attacking Assyrians. Although the Aramean nation fell, its language did not; Aramaic, which is very similar to [Hebrew](#), was adopted not only by Babylonian Jews as the "Jewish tongue," but also by the well-informed as the language of choice. It was not until Greek emerged several centuries later that Aramaic lost its prestige as the most sophisticated language. Jewish practices still performed in Aramaic include the Ketubah ([wedding](#) contract), the Get (the [divorce](#) contract), and the [Kaddish](#) (mourner's prayer). Interestingly, much of [Kabbalah](#) (Jewish mysticism) is written in Aramaic. Also, the [Talmud](#) is written in a combination of Aramaic and [Hebrew](#).

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.

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## The Assyrians

(1170-612 BC)

The Assyrians were Semitic people living in the northern reaches of Mesopotamia; they have a long history in the area, but for most of that history they are subjugated to the more powerful kingdoms and peoples to the south. Under the monarch, Shamshi-Adad, the Assyrians attempted to build their own empire, but Hammurabi soon crushed the attempt and the Assyrians disappear from the historical stage. Eventually the Semitic peoples living in northern Mesopotamia were invaded by another Asiatic people, the Hurrians, who migrated into the area and began to build an empire of their own. But the Hurrian dream of empire was soon swallowed up in the dramatic growth of the Hittite empire, and the young Hurrian nation was swamped. After centuries of attempts at independence, the Assyrians finally had an independent state of their own since the Hittites did not annex Assyrian cities. For the next several hundred years, the balance of power would shift from the north to the south

Beginning with the monarch, Tukulti-Ninurta (1235-1198 BC), Assyria began its first conquests, in this case the conquest of Babylon. The Assyrian dream of empire began with the monarch, Tiglat-Pileser (1116-1090), who extended Assyrian dominance to Syria and Armenia. But the greatest period of conquest occurred between 883 and 824, under the monarchies of Ashurnazirpal II (883-859 BC) and Shalmeneser III (858-824 BC), who conquered all of Syria and Palestine, all of Armenia, and, the prize of prizes, Babylon and southern Mesopotamia. The Assyrian conquerors invented a new policy towards the conquered: in order to prevent nationalist revolts by the conquered people, the Assyrians would force the people they conquered to migrate in large numbers to other areas



of the empire. Besides guaranteeing the security of an empire built off of conquered people of different cultures and languages, these mass deportations of the populations in the Middle East, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, turned the region into a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions, and languages. Whereas there would be little cultural contact between the conquered and the conquerors in early Mesopotamian history, under the Assyrians the entire area became a vast experiment in cultural mixing. It was the Assyrian monarch, Sargon II (721-705 BC), who first forcefully relocated Hebrews after the conquest of Israel, the northern kingdom of the Hebrews. Although this was a comparatively mild deportation and perfectly in line with Assyrian practice, it marks the historical beginning of the Jewish diaspora. This chapter in the Jewish diaspora, however, never has been really written, for the Hebrews deported from Israel seem to have blended in with Assyrian society and, by the time Nebuchadnezzar II conquers Judah (587 BC), the southern kingdom of the Hebrews, the Israelites deported by Sargon II have disappeared nameless and faceless into the sands of northern Mesopotamia.

The monarchs of Assyria, who hated Babylon with a passion since it constantly contemplated independence and sedition, destroyed that city and set up their capital in Nineveh. Later, however, feeling that the Babylonian god, Marduk, was angry at them, they rebuilt the city and returned the idol of Marduk to a temple in Babylon. The last great monarch of Assyria was Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC), who not only extended the empire, but also began a project of assembling a library of tablets of all the literature of Mesopotamia. Thirty thousand tablets still remain of Ashurbanipal's great library in the city of Nineveh; these tablets are our single greatest source of knowledge of Mesopotamian culture, myth, and literature.

After Ashurbanipal, the great Assyrian empire began to crumble; the greatest pressure on the empire came from their old and bitter enemies, the Babylonians. Aided by another Semitic people, the Medes, the Babylonians led by Nabopolassar eventually conquered the Assyrian capital of Nineveh and burned it to the ground, ending forever Assyrian dominance in the region.

## **The Assyrian State**

Simply put, the Assyrian state was forged in the crucible of war, invasion, and conquest. The upper, land-holding classes consisted almost entirely of

military commanders who grew wealthy from the spoils taken in war. The army was the largest standing army ever seen in the Middle East or Mediterranean. The exigencies of war excited technological innovation which made the Assyrians almost unbeatable: iron swords, lances, metal armor, and battering rams made them a fearsome foe in battle.

## Science and Mathematics

The odd paradox of Assyrian culture was the dramatic growth in science and mathematics; this can be in part explained by the Assyrian obsession with war and invasion. Among the great mathematical inventions of the Assyrians were the division of the circle into 360 degrees and were among the first to invent longitude and latitude in geographical navigation. They also developed a sophisticated medical science which greatly influenced medical science as far away as Greece.

See also [Map of the Assyrian Empire](#)

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# Revival of the Assyrian Empire under Tiglath-Pileser

**(745-730 B.C.E.)**

**by Andrew Taylor**

The [Assyrian Empire](#) was once a mighty power. The empire thrived for a few hundred years, before declining around 1200 B.C.E.. Starting in the year 745 B.C.E., the Assyrian Empire began to revive behind the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser.

Tiglath-Pileser began by marching his army into [Babylon](#) in 745. He then attacked all the tribes around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, including the [Chaldeans](#), Arabs, and [Arameans](#). In the year 744, Tiglath-Pileser attacked the [Persians](#) and conquered many of their tribes. After doing so, he returned to Assyria with 50000 prisoners, as well as a large number of horses, oxen, sheep, and other animals. In the year 743, Tiglath-Pileser conquered the army of Sardari and captured 73,000 soldiers. He then proceeded to enter the Syrian city of Arpad, where all the kings of Upper Syria paid him tribute because of his power.

In the year 735, Tiglath-Pileser marched his army into Ararat and conquered it. Also during that year, Syria and Israel formed an alliance and attacked Judah. Ahaz, the king of [Judah](#), sent messengers to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, carrying tribute and asking Tiglath-Pileser for his help against Syria and Israel. Tiglath-Pileser accepted his offer and in the year 734, he marched his army into Syria and found the army of Rezon, a Syrian king, waiting for him. Tiglath-Pileser completely annihilated this

army and laid siege to Damascus. He left part of his army at Damascus to continue the siege, and set out with the rest to attack Israel. He plundered Israel and the Israelite king, Pekah, took refuge in Samaria. He also conquered the Ammonites and the Moabites, and placed them under tribute. Tiglath-Pileser then marched toward Gaza. When the king of Gaza, Hanun, heard this, he fled to Egypt. Tiglath-Pileser occupied Gaza, but eventually allowed Hanun to return, and placed him under tribute. Also in the year 734, he conquered many of the Arab tribes under Queen Samsi's rule.

In the year 732, the siege of Damascus was completed. Damascus now was in Assyrian hands. After Damascus fell, Tiglath-Pileser invaded Babylon again. In the year 730, Assyria was the undisputed power in the Middle East.

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Edited, Researched and Written by: Andrew Taylor, [ataylor1@student.northpark.edu](mailto:ataylor1@student.northpark.edu), October 6, 1998

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Source: [WebChronology Project](#)

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## The Canaanites

Canaan is the ancient name for the land of Israel. The [Torah](#) gave [Abraham](#) the land of Canaan, which in some cases stretched from southern Syria to the Eastern Sinai and, in other Torah references, was only a small strip hugging the Mediterranean. Under the leadership of Joshua the Israelites conquered Canaan, which had previously been divided into seven city states. Today, the land of Canaan is known as Palestine, Eretz Yisrael and Israel.

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## The Chaldeans

### (612-539 BC)

After the fall of [Assyrian](#) power in Mesopotamia, the last great group of Semitic peoples dominated the area. Suffering mightily under the Assyrians, the city of Babylon finally rose up against its hated enemy, the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, and burned it to the ground. The chief of the Babylonians was Nabopolassar; the Semites living in the northern part of Mesopotamia would never gain their independence again.

Nabopolassar was succeeded by his son, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC). Nebuchadnezzar was the equal of all the great Mesopotamian conquerors, from Sargon onwards; he not only prevented major powers such as Egypt and Syria from making inroads on his territory, he also conquered the Phoenicians and the state of Judah (586 BC), the southern Jewish [kingdom](#) that remained after the subjugation of Israel, the northern [kingdom](#), by the [Assyrians](#). In order to secure the territory of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar brought Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, the two kings of Judah (in succession) and held them in Babylon. In keeping with Assyrian practice, the "**New Babylonians**," or **Chaldeans** forced a large part of the Jewish population to relocate. Numbering possibly up to 10,000, these Jewish deportees were largely upper class people and craftspeople; this deportation marks the beginning of the [Exile](#) in Jewish history.

Under Nebuchadnezzar, the city of Babylon was rebuilt with great splendor; it would eventually become one of the most magnificent human cities in the area of the Middle East and Mediterranean. But all was not



perfect beneath the shining surface; there still existed a number of cities that were loyal to the Assyrians. The entire period dominated by the Babylonians, in fact, is a period of great unrest as Babylonian hegemony was continually tested by philo-Assyrians. This conflict slammed the door on the Babylonian empire after a dynasty of only five kings. Babylon in 555 BC came under the control of a king loyal to the [Assyrians](#), Nabonidus (555-539 BC), who attacked Babylonian culture at its heart: he placed the Assyrian moon-god, Sin, above the Babylonian's principal god, Marduk, who symbolized not only the faith of Babylon but the very city and people itself. Angered and bitter, the priests and those faithful to Babylon would welcome Cyrus the Conqueror of Persia into their city and end forever Semitic domination of Mesopotamia. The center of the Middle Eastern world shifted to Cyrus's capital, Susa, and it would shift again after the Greeks and then the Romans. For almost two and a half centuries, Mesopotamia and Babylon at its center, dominated the landscape of early civilization in the Middle East to be finally eclipsed by the rising sun of the Indo-European cultures to the north and to the west.

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## The Edomites

Traditional enemies of the Israelites, the Edomites were the descendants of Esau who often battled the Jewish nation. Edom was in southeast Palestine, stretched from the Red Sea at Elath to the [Dead Sea](#), and encompassed some of Israel's most fertile land. The Edomites attacked Israel under [Saul's](#) rulership. [King David](#) would later defeat the rogue nation, annexing their land. At the fall of the [First Temple](#), the Edomites attacked Judah and looted the Temple, accelerating its destruction. The Edomites were later forcibly converted into [Judaism](#) by John Hyrcanus, and then became an active part of the Jewish people. Famous Edomites include [Herod](#), who built the Second Temple.

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## Greeks and Jews

(332-63 BC)

In the Table of Nations in [Genesis 10.1-32](#), which lists the descendants of Noah and the nations they founded, the Greeks appear under the name "Yavan," who is a son of Yaphet. Yavan is parallel with the Greek word, "Ionia," the Greek region of Asia Minor; "Yaphet" is parallel with the Greek word, "Iapetus," who is the mythological father of Prometheus in Greek legend. Two other Greek nations appear in the table: Rhodes (Rodanim) and Cyprus (Kittim and Elishah). The sons of Shem, brother to Yaphet, are the Semitic (named after Shem) nations, including the Hebrews. Imagine, if you will, the Hebrew vision of history. At some point, in the dim recesses of time, after the world had been destroyed by flood, the nations of the earth were all contained in the three sons of Noah. Their sons and grandsons all knew one another, spoke the same language, ate the same mails, worshipped the same god. How odd and unmeasurably strange it must have been, then, when after an infinite multitude of generations and millennia of separation, the descendants of Yavan moved among the descendants of Shem!



They came unexpectedly. After two centuries of serving as a vassal state to Persia, Judah suddenly found itself the vassal state of Macedonia, a Greek state. [Alexander the Great](#) had conquered Persia and had, in doing so, conquered most of the world. For most of the world belonged to Persia; in a blink of an eye, it now fell to the Greeks.

This great Greek empire would last no longer than Alexander's brief life; after his death, altercations between his generals led to the division of his empire among three generals. One general, Antigonos and then later Ptolemy, inherited Egypt; another, Seleucus, inherited the Middle East and Mesopotamia. After two centuries of peace under the Persians, the Hebrew state found itself once more caught in the middle of power struggles between two great empires: the Seleucid state with its capital in Syria to the north and the Ptolemaic state, with its capital in Egypt to the south. Once more, Judah would be conquered first by one, and then by the other, as it shifted from being a Seleucid vassal state to a Ptolemaic vassal state. Between 319 and 302 BCE, [Jerusalem](#) changed hands seven times.

Like all others in the region, the Jews bitterly resented the Greeks. They were more foreign than any group they had ever seen. In a state founded on maintaining the purity of the Hebrew religion, the gods of the Greeks seemed wildly offensive. In a society rigidly opposed to the exposure of the body, the Greek practice of wrestling in the nude and deliberately dressing light must have been appalling! In a religion that specifically singles out homosexuality as a crime

against Yahweh, the Greek attitude and even preference for homosexuality must have been incomprehensible.

In general, though, the Greeks left the Jews alone; adopting Cyrus's policy, they allowed the Jews to run their own country, declared that the law of Judah was the [Torah](#), and attempted to preserve Jewish religion. When the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, desecrated the [Temple](#) in 168 BCE, he touched off a Jewish revolt under the [Maccabees](#); for a brief time, Judah became an independent state again.

During this period, Jewish history takes place in several areas: in Judah, in Mesopotamia and other parts of the Middle East, and Egypt. For the dispersion of the Jews had begun during the Exile, and large, powerful groups of Jews lived all throughout the Persian empire and later the Hellenistic kingdoms ("Hellenistic"="Greek"). The Greeks brought with them a brand new concept: the "polis," or "city-state." Among the revolutionary ideas of the *polis* was the idea of *naturalization*. In the ancient world, it was not possible to become a citizen of a state if you weren't born in that state. If you were born in Israel, and you moved to Tyre, or Babylon, or Egypt, you were always an Israelite. Your legal status in the country you're living in would be "foreigner" or "sojourner." The Greeks, however, would allow foreigners to become citizens in the *polis*; it became possible all throughout the Middle East for Hebrews and others to become citizens of states other than Judah. This is vital for understanding the Jewish dispersion; for the rights of citizenship (or near-citizenship, called *politumata*), allowed Jews to remain outside of Judaea and still thrive. In many foreign cities throughout the Hellenistic world, the Jews formed unified and solid communities; Jewish women enjoyed more rights and autonomy in these communities rather than at home.





The most important event of the Hellenistic period, though, is the translation of the [Torah](#) into Greek in Ptolemaic Egypt. The Greeks, in fact, were somewhat interested (not much) in the Jewish religion, but it seems that they wanted a copy of the Jewish scriptures for the library at Alexandria. During the [Exile](#), the Exiles began to purify their religion and practices and turned to the Mosaic books as their model. After the Exile, the [Torah](#) became the authoritative code of the Jews, recognized first by Persia and later by the Greeks as the Hebrew "law." In 458 BCE, Artaxerxes I of Persia made the [Torah](#) the "law of the Judaeen king."

So the Greeks wanted a copy and set about translating it. Called the **Septuagint** after the number of translators it required ("septuaginta" is Greek for "seventy"), the text is far from perfect. The Hebrew [Torah](#) had not settled down into a definitive version, and a number of mistranslations creep in for reasons ranging from political expediency to confusion. For instance, the Hebrew [Torah](#) is ruthlessly anti-Egyptian; after all, the founding event of the Hebrew people was the oppression of the Hebrews by the Egyptians and the delivery from Egypt. The Septuagint translators—who are, after all, working for the Greek rulers of Egypt—go about effacing much of the anti-Egyptian aspects. On the other hand, there are words they can't translate into Greek, such as "[berit](#)," which they translate "diatheke," or "promise" (in Latin and English, the word is incorrectly translated "covenant").

Despite these imperfections, the Septuagint is a watershed in Jewish history.



More than any other event in Jewish history, this translation would make the Hebrew religion into a world religion. It would otherwise have faded from memory like the infinity of Semitic religions that have been lost to us. This Greek version made the Hebrew scriptures available to the Mediterranean world and to early Christians who were otherwise fain to regard Christianity as a religion unrelated to Judaism. Even with a Greek translation, the Hebrew scriptures came within a hair's breadth of being tossed out of the Christian canon. From this Greek translation, the Hebrew view of God, of history, of law, and of the human condition, in all its magnificence would spread around the world. The dispersion, or Diaspora, of the Jews would involve ideas as well as people.

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## Alexander the Great

(356-323 B.C.E.)

Alexander the Great, born in 356 BCE in Pella, Macedonia, was the son of Philip of Macedon and Princess Olympias of Epirus. As a young boy he was always fearless, strong, and eager to learn. He went on to inherit each of his parents best qualities. His father was an excellent general and organizer, while his mother was extremely intelligent. At the age of thirteen he became a pupil of Aristotle. It was Aristotle who inspired Alexander's great love for literature. Through his mentor Alexander learned the Greek ways of living and the ideals of Greek civilization. However, it was not all work and no play for the young Alexander. He spent a great deal of time participating in sports and daily exercise to develop a strong body.

At a fairly young age Alexander was given many responsibilities. His father made him his ambassador to Athens when he was eighteen. Two years later he became the King of Macedonia. During this time the Greek states had become restless under Macedonian rule. While Alexander was away fighting, the people of Thebes seized the opportunity and revolted. When Alexander returned he attacked the city and destroyed almost everything in sight. This dissipated any further attempts at rebellion and Alexander quickly united the Greek cities and formed the League of Nations, of which he became president.

Soon after this victory, Alexander set out to conquer Persia. On the banks of the Granicus River Alexander quickly defeated the Persian troops who had been waiting for him. This victory made the rest of Asia Minor vulnerable. In 333 BCE Alexander marched into Syria. Even though

Darius III, King of Persia, had raised a large army he was unable to withstand Alexander's powerful infantry and phalanx. The entire region soon submitted to Alexander. Following this he went to Egypt, where he was welcomed as a deliverer because the Egyptians hated their cruel Persian rulers. It was here that Alexander founded the famous city that bears his name. Alexandria, situated on a strip of land between Lake Mareotis and the Mediterranean Sea, became a world center of commerce and learning.

Alexander was soon drawn into battle with the Persians again. In the decisive Battle of Gaugamela, Alexander routed Darius and forced his entire army east. After this the city of Babylon surrendered, which allowed Alexander to easily capture Susa and Persepolis. Darius was soon killed by one of his generals which made Alexander King of Asia. He did not rest for long, as he had set his sights on India. In 326 BCE Alexander defeated Porus, the prince of India.

Alexander was now at the height of his power. His empire stretched from the Ionian Sea to northern India. However, Alexander had even greater plans. He wanted to combine Asia and Europe into one country, and named Babylon the new capital. In order to attain this goal he encouraged intermarriages, did away with corrupt officials, and spread Greek ideas, customs, and laws into Asia. The great and many plans that he had abruptly came to an end. While in Babylon Alexander became seriously ill with malaria and on June 13, 323 BCE he died. During his time he conquered most of the civilized world and has been remembered as one of the greatest generals in history.

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Source: [WebChronology Project](#)

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## The Hittites

Like the [Amorites](#), the Hittites were one of the nations conquered by the Israelites. At their peak in 1500 BCE, the Hittites' kingdom stretched from Asia Minor to southern Syria. There are many parallels between the Egyptian and Hittite cultures: Both kingdoms centered their cities along a dominant river (the Nile and Euphrates, respectively), both believed their king to be an emissary of God, and both practiced feudalistic systems which included slavery. There are several interactions between the Hittites and the Israelites in the [Torah](#), including when [Abraham](#) purchases a cave from [Machpelah](#), a Hittite as well as when Esau takes a Hittite wife.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY:

Behrman House, Inc. 1976.

Schreiber, Mordecai (ed.). [The Shengold Jewish Encyclopedia](#). Shengold Books. 1998.

Telushkin, Joseph. [Jewish Literacy](#). William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1991.

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## The Medes

The kingdom of Media was located in the region between the southwest Caspian sea and the Persian Gulf. Biblical sources, as well as Greek historians, often confused the Median kingdom with the nearby [Persians](#). The Median tribe cooperated with the [Babylonians](#) but, in the 6th century [BCE](#), were defeated by Cyrus of Persia.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.

Schreiber, Mordecai (ed.). [The Shengold Jewish Encyclopedia](#). Shengold Books. 1998.

Telushkin, Joseph. [Jewish Literacy](#). William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1991.

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## The Midianites

The son of [Abraham](#) and Keturah, Midian began a nomadic tribe which wandered the banks of the Red Sea as well as the Syrian desert. The Midianites had a close relationship with the Jewish people. For example, when [Moses](#) fled from Pharaoh, he went to the Midians and married Tzipporah, the daughter of a Medianite priest.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY: Behrman House, Inc. 1976.  
Schreiber, Mordecai (ed.). [The Shengold Jewish Encyclopedia](#). Shengold Books. 1998.  
Telushkin, Joseph. [Jewish Literacy](#). William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1991.

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## The Moabites

According to the [Bible](#), Moab was the son of Lot, and therefore the nation of Moab was related to the Israelites ([Genesis 19:30-38](#)). The Moabites, who settled east of the [Dead Sea](#) (present day [Jordan](#)), had a highly developed culture, and artifacts written in [Hebrew](#) bearing Moabite inscriptions support the widely held view that the Moabites spoke the biblical language. During the Exodus period, part of the Moab kingdom was taken by the [Amorites](#); Israel would later capture the territory. This parcel of land then became the object of contention and exacerbated animosity between the two nations. One example of the feud between the two nations is the story in the Torah of Balaam, who was sent by Moabite king Balak to curse the Jewish nation.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#). NY:

Behrman House, Inc. 1976.

Schreiber, Mordecai (ed.). [The Shengold Jewish Encyclopedia](#). Shengold Books. 1998.

Telushkin, Joseph. [Jewish Literacy](#). William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1991.

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## The Nabatean Kings

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*The fall of the kingdom of Judea was followed by the rise of the Nabateans beginning in the fourth century B.C.E. These traders traveled in caravans from Arabia and made their capital Petra, in what is now southern Jordan. They eventually controlled trade in perfumes and spices and built numerous fortresses along the branch of the Spice Route in the Negev Desert.*

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### Aretas I

The first known Nabatean king. His name appears on the earliest Nabatean inscription discovered to date, a 168 BCE carving found in Halutza. He is also mentioned in 2 Maccabees 5:8. The passage relates that Jason, the high priest who established a

Hellenistic polis in Jerusalem, was held prisoner by Aretas I after being forced to leave the city.

Rabel I Aretas I's successor, whose reign began c. 140 BCE. His name is known from a statue dedicated to him in Petra.

### Aretas II

Rabel I's successor. His reign began in 120 or 110 BCE and he ruled until 96 BCE. Aretas II was a contemporary of the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus, whose expansionist policies were a direct threat to the Nabatean

kingdom.

## Obodas (Avdat) I

Obodas I ascended the throne in 90 BCE and defeated Alexander Jannaeus in a battle on the [Golan Heights](#)—probably the key to the Nabatean return to the Negev. The town of Oboda (Avdat) was named for the victor, who was worshiped as a god even after his death.

## Aretas III (87-62 BCE)

Hostilities between the [Hasmoneans](#) and the Nabateans came to a head with the rise to power of Aretas III. In 84 BCE he conquered Damascus. He later invaded the Hasmonean kingdom and defeated Alexander Jannaeus at Hadid (a few kilometers east of Ben-Gurion Airport). The latter retaliated by capturing Nabatean cities in Moab and attacking the Bashan and Gilead. Alexander was succeeded by his wife Shlomit; after her death, her sons Hyrcanus and Aristobolus fought over the throne, which the latter finally ascended.

Hyrcanus fled to Aretas III, with whom he forged an alliance. In 65 BCE the Nabatean army besieged [Jerusalem](#), but its attack was to end the following year when the Romans appeared in the East. The two Hasmonean brothers took their case to Pompey, who sent Scaurus to Jerusalem to force a Nabatean retreat.

## Obodas II

Obodas II's existence was uncertain for years, until an inscription recently found east of the Suez Canal confirmed it. He probably ruled for only a few months.

## Malichus I (60-30 BCE)

Obodas II's son. In 40 BCE he helped the Parthians overrun Syria and Palestine. After the Romans expelled the Parthians in 34 BCE, they confiscated Malichus's date groves around Jericho and his Red Sea harbors. Herod also fought Malichus, defeating his army near Philadelphia (present-day Amman).

## Obodas III (30-9 BCE)

This king's reign was an era of cultural flowering for the Nabatean kingdom. Under him, most of its temples were built, including that at Avdat. It was during his days that the Romans attempted to discover the sources of the perfume and spice trade.

### **Aretas IV (9 BCE-40 CE)**

Aretas IV was the greatest of the Nabatean kings. During his reign, large religious centers-also serving as banks and clearinghouses-were established on the Hauran, in Petra, and at Avdat. Aretas's daughter married Herod Antipas, tetrarch of the Galilee. When Antipas took another wife, Herodias, Aretas's daughter returned to her father, who went to war against the Jewish tetrarch and defeated him. Antipas appealed to Emperor Tiberius, who dispatched the governor of Syria to attack Aretas. The episode was an important factor in the beheading of John the Baptist. Aretas is mentioned by Paul in connection with his visit to Damascus (2 Corinthians 11:32).

### **Malichus II (40-70 CE)**

In Malichus's time, Nabatean trade dwindled as the Romans diverted the perfume and spice cargos to Egypt. Malichus sent 5,000 horsemen and 1,000 soldiers to help Titus quash the Jewish revolt.

### **Rabel II (70-105)**

Rabel II was the last of the Nabatean kings; Emperor Trajan deemed his death the right moment to annex the Nabatean kingdom. On March 22, 105, it was incorporated into the new Roman province of Provincia Arabia.

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Source: Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority, *Scented Cities: The Nabatean Negev*, (Israel: Eretz ha-Tzvi, 1999)

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## The Persians

By Mitchell Bard

The [Babylonians](#) ruled the world in the sixth century B.C. Yet, afterwards, in the course of about half a century, they ceased to exist. This is remarkable enough, but it is even more astounding that their successors, the Persians, had did not existed before! In 560 B.C., Cyrus the Great became the king of Persia, a small state in the Middle East, and within 30 years had replaced the Babylonian empire with his own.

Cyrus also unexpectedly told the Jews that they could return to their homeland. While he was probably motivated primarily by the desire to have someone else rebuild Palestine and to make it a source of income for the Persian Empire, the impact on the Jews was to reinvigorate their faith and stimulate them to reconstruct the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#). The Second Temple was completed on the very site of the first Temple in 516 B.C.

Though Cyrus allowed the Jews freedom to practice their religion, he would not permit them to reestablish the monarchy. Instead, Cyrus sent Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of [David](#), along with 42,360 other exiles to establish what essentially became a theocracy, with Zerubbabel as High Priest.

Over the next 150 years, Judea flourished as the Jews rebuilt [Jerusalem](#) and developed the surrounding areas. The Persians resisted any Jewish efforts to restore the monarchy, but allowed them a high degree of autonomy under the High Priest, whose power was partially checked by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Court, and the Popular Assemblies.



During this period, [Judaism's Written Law](#) took its final form. One of the key changes in the history of Judaism was the imposition at this time of a ban on intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. Though from that point to the present, the adherence to this rule has not been universal, it is one of the central tenets of Judaism and perhaps the most important reason for the survival of the Jewish people., Unlike other peoples, they did not disappear through assimilation and intermarriage.

See also: [The Persian Empire Map](#)

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Source: Bard, Mitchell G. [\*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Middle East Conflicts\*](#). NY: MacMillan, 1999.

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## Roman Rule

**(63 BCE-313 CE)**

When the Romans replaced the Seleucids as the great power in the region, they granted the Hasmonean king, Hyrcanus II, limited authority under the Roman governor of Damascus. The Jews were hostile to the new regime, and the following years witnessed frequent insurrections. A last attempt to restore the former glory of the [Hasmonean](#) dynasty was made by Mattathias Antigonus, whose defeat and death brought [Hasmonean](#) rule to an end (40 [BCE](#)), and the Land became a province of the Roman Empire.

In 37 BCE, [Herod](#), a son-in-law of Hyrcanus II, was appointed King of Judea by the Romans. Granted almost unlimited autonomy in the country's internal affairs, he became one of the most powerful monarchs in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. A great admirer of Greco-Roman culture, Herod launched a massive construction program, which included the cities of Caesarea and Sebaste and the fortresses at Herodium and [Masada](#). He also remodeled the [Temple](#) into one of the most magnificent buildings of its time. But despite his many achievements, Herod failed to win the trust and support of his Jewish subjects.

Ten years after Herod's death (4 BCE), Judea came under direct Roman administration. Growing anger against increased Roman suppression of Jewish life resulted in sporadic violence which escalated into a full-scale revolt in 66 CE. Superior Roman forces led by Titus were finally victorious, razing [Jerusalem](#) to the ground (70 CE) and defeating the last Jewish outpost at [Masada](#) (73 CE).

The total destruction of [Jerusalem](#) and the [Temple](#) was catastrophic for the Jewish people. According to the contemporary historian [Josephus Flavius](#), hundreds of thousands of Jews perished in the siege of [Jerusalem](#) and elsewhere in the country, and many thousands more were sold into slavery.

A last brief period of Jewish sovereignty in ancient times followed the [revolt](#) of [Shimon Bar Kokhba](#) (132 CE), during which [Jerusalem](#) and Judea were regained. However, given the overwhelming power of the Romans, the outcome was inevitable. Three years later, in conformity with Roman custom, Jerusalem was "plowed up with a yoke of oxen," Judea was [renamed](#) Palaestina and Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina.

Although the [Temple](#) had been destroyed and [Jerusalem](#) burned to the ground, the Jews and [Judaism](#) survived the encounter with Rome. The supreme legislative and judicial body, the [Sanhedrin](#) (successor of the [Knesset Hagedolah](#)) was reconvened in Yavneh (70 CE), and later in [Tiberias](#). Without the unifying framework of a state and the [Temple](#), the small remaining Jewish community gradually recovered, reinforced from time to time by returning exiles. Institutional and communal life was renewed, priests were replaced by [rabbis](#) and the [synagogue](#) became the focus of Jewish settlement, as evidenced by remnants of synagogues found at [Capernaum](#), Korazin, Bar'am, [Gamla](#) and elsewhere. [Halakhah](#) (Jewish religious law) served as the common bond among the Jews and was passed on from generation to generation.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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# Edict of Augustus on Jewish Rights

(1 BCE)

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Caesar Augustus, pontifex maximus, holding the tribunician power, proclaims: Since the nation of the Jews and Hyrcanus, their high priest, have been found grateful to the people of the Romans, not only in the present but also in the past, and particularly in the time of my father, Caesar, emperor, it seems good to me and to my advisory council, according to the oaths, by the will of the people of the Romans, that the Jews shall use their own customs in accordance with their ancestral law, just as they used to use them in the time of Hyrcanus, the high priest of their highest god; and that their sacred offerings shall be inviolable and shall be sent to Jerusalem and shall be paid to the financial officials of Jerusalem; and that they shall not give sureties for appearance in court on the Sabbath or on the day of preparation before it after the ninth hour. But if anyone is detected stealing their sacred books or their sacred monies, either from a synagogue or from a mens' apartment, he shall be considered sacrilegious and his property shall be brought into the public treasury of the Romans.

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Source: [Internet Ancient History Sourcebook](http://www.internetancienthistory.com/Sourcebook/Augedict.html)

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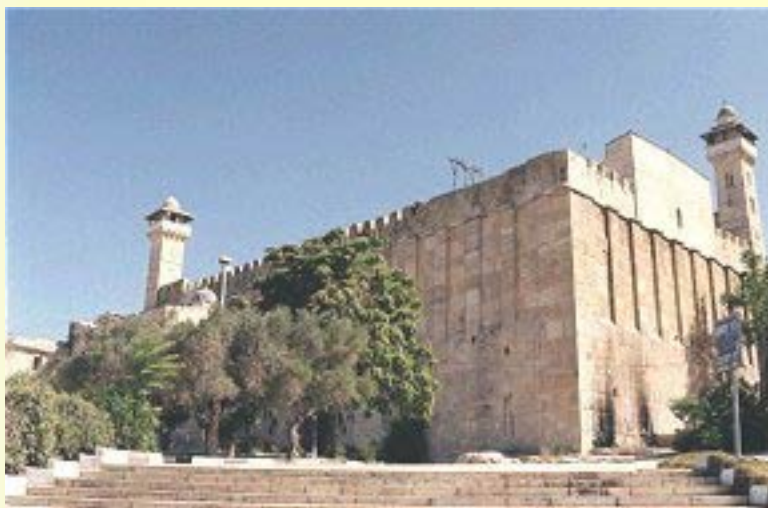
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### An Introduction to the City of Hebron



[Hebron](#), Al-Khalil in Arabic, Chevron in Hebrew, is the heart of a wide hilly region. Some of its neighborhoods reach the altitude of 1000 meters above sea level. The Old City, also called Qasba in

Arabic, and the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpela are situated on the northern flank of a valley, at an altitude of approximately 860m. This relatively high altitude grants the city cool weather during summertime and abundant rainfalls in winter.

Agricultural areas surround the city. Farmers in the Hebron region usually cultivate fruits such as grapes and plums. In addition to agriculture, local economy relies on handicraft, small- and medium-scale industry and construction. Surrounded by towns as Halhul, Yatta, Dura, Al-Dhahariya, each counting more than 20,000 inhabitants, Hebron is one of the most important marketplaces in the Palestinian Territories.

### Population

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the city has expanded dramatically, mostly along the roads leading to [Jerusalem](#) and [Beersheva](#). In 1997, Hebron counted 120,000 inhabitants. This makes it the second most populated [West Bank](#) city after Jerusalem. The municipality borders

delimit a territory of approximately 17 km<sup>2</sup>.

Apart from Jewish settlers and Israeli troops, the population of the city is mostly [Muslim](#). For centuries, however, an important Jewish community was part of Hebron society. This peaceful coexistence ended brutally with the [1929 riots](#), during which some 60 Hebronite Jews were killed.

Subsequently, the [British mandatory authorities](#) transferred the Jewish population from the city.

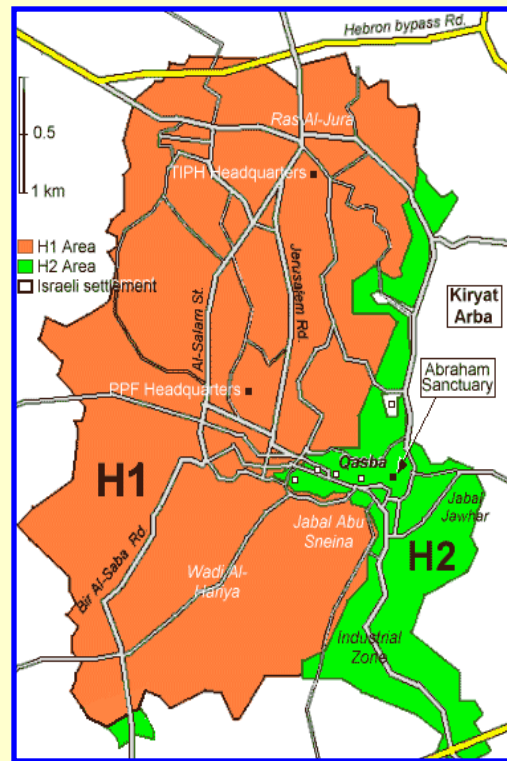
Hebron has the reputation of being a conservative and traditional city. No cinemas or places of entertainment can be found here. There are very few restaurants and coffeehouses, compared to other Palestinian cities. Nevertheless, the city enjoys a rich community life, with a number of popular institutions, such as women and youth groups, and art centers. Hebron also has its own university, founded in 1973, and a polytechnic school.

## **The Distinction between "H1" and "H2"**

In January 1997, after nearly thirty years of occupation, the [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#) withdrew from some 80 percent of the Hebron municipal territory. This redeployment, originally agreed upon in the [Interim Agreement \(Oslo II\)](#) of September 1995, was postponed for several months, until a new agreement - the "[Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron](#)" - was reached. In the meantime, most of the biggest West Bank cities had already been handed over to the Palestinian Authority.



In the Hebron Protocol, a distinction is made between Hebron's "H1" and "H2" areas. The status of the largest part of the city, "H1", is similar to the one pertaining to "Area A". The Palestinian Police Forces (PPF) exercise full control over "H1", while the IDF are not allowed to enter, unless escorted by Palestinian security forces. Yet, the IDF maintain indirect control over this part of the city, by occasionally establishing checkpoints at entrances to the city, or by closing these points of access. "H1" covers residential sectors as well as the commercial areas of Bab Al-Zawiya and Wadi Al-Tuffah, situated west of the Old City.



In the remaining part of the city, "H2", Israel maintains military presence, as well as control over various aspects of Palestinian daily life. Palestinian civil institutions operate under certain restrictions imposed by the Israeli military administration. When it comes to the PPF, they are only present when they participate in joint patrols led by the IDF.

"H2" covers approximately 20 percent of the municipal territory. It comprises the entire Qasba and areas adjacent to the Jewish settlements. The population in this area is composed of an estimated 30,000-35,000 Palestinians and approximately 400 Jewish settlers.

This relatively small sector is the geographic, economic, historic and religious center of Hebron.

## Al-Shuhada Street and the Old City

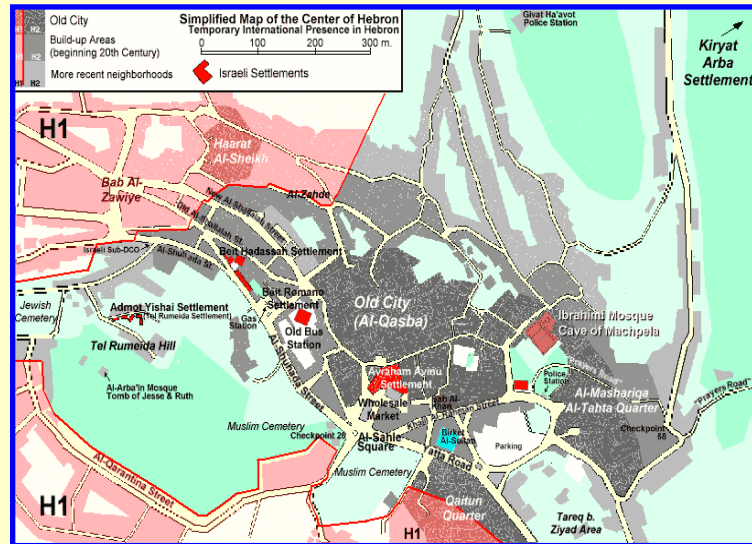
One main road runs through "H2" and connects the western to the eastern part of the city: Al-Shuhada Street. The traffic on this street, where three of the four Israeli settlements of Hebron are located, is tightly controlled by the IDF. Various restrictions are imposed on Palestinian motorists who want to use it. A bus station used to be located along Al-Shuhada Street. This popular meeting point was closed in 1986 and subsequently turned into an Israeli military compound. To this day, these successive measures

have led to the virtual extinction of the economic activity along Al-Shuhada Street.

In spite of being located inside the Israeli-controlled area of the city, the Souq situated inside the Qasba and behind Al-Shuhada Street remains one of the busiest in the West Bank. However, the wholesale vegetables market (Al-Hisbe), adjacent to the Souq, has also been closed by Israel, due to security considerations.

The Qasba itself is no longer among the most densely populated areas of the city. Since the first half of the twentieth century, its population dropped from 8,000 to a few hundred. To reverse this evolution, the Palestinian local authorities have, since 1997, made a

continuous effort to renovate, rehabilitate and develop the Old City. This led to an increase in the number of families moving into the Qasba. Similarly, efforts are being made to highlight its cultural heritage.



Located northeast of the Old City, the Ibrahimi Mosque/[Cave of Machpela](#) is included in the area under Israeli control, as are Islamic institutions, and a number of old mosques.

## The Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpela

The question of the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpela is among the most sensitive issues in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The sanctuary is dedicated to [Abraham](#), the patriarch of both Arabs and Jews. Deep-rooted in Jewish tradition, the history of the Cave of Machpela takes on a special importance, as the site is believed to be the first piece of land bought by Abraham in the Promised Land.

Since the Islamic conquest of the region, in the seventh century, the site is predominantly revered by Muslims as Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi, the Abraham Sanctuary or Ibrahimi Mosque. For seven centuries, its access

was restricted to Muslim worshippers only. Jewish pilgrims were allowed to pray at a special location, outside the building.

During the [1967 War](#), on the same day the Israeli troops entered Hebron, the IDF chaplain placed a [Torah](#) scroll inside the Mosque. This initiative made it possible for Jews to hold prayers and religious services in various parts of the sanctuary - sometimes at the same time and place as the Muslims. This move raised a wide indignation among the Arab public opinion and Muslim clergymen. According to them, the installation of a [synagogue](#) inside the sanctuary challenges the Muslim character of the site.

The recent history of the site was marked by the massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers by a [Kiryat Arba](#) settler, in February 1994. An Israeli commission headed by Meir Shamgar examined the circumstances of the bloodshed. Its recommendations led to a number of new arrangements, such as the establishment of a physical separation between the worshippers of the two communities and the tightening of the security checks at the entrances. It was also decided that on an equal number of days a year, the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpela would be reserved for members of one community only.

## Jewish Settlements

Hebron is the only West Bank City where a number of Israelis have settled. In 1968, a group of Israelis occupied a small hotel in Hebron, expressing their intention to re-establish a Jewish community in Hebron. They failed to obtain an authorization from the Israeli military administration, but were granted the right to build a [settlement](#) on uninhabited land outside the city: Kiryat Arba. A few years later, in the early 1980s, Israelis received from the government the permission to dwell in old houses that used to belong to members of the old Hebronite Jewish community, to re-build parts of the run-down Jewish Quarter and to settle in houses of disputed ownership.

Four small Israeli settlements have been established between 1979 and 1984 - in the Qasba, along Al-Shuhada Street and on top of the Tel Rumeida hill, overlooking the Old City. These settlements number less than fifty families, that is, approximately, 400 people. In addition, Hebron is bordered to the east by the large settlement of Kiryat Arba, whose population now reaches 6,000. Noteworthy, the settlements are all located either close to densely populated, or to busy commercial areas.

The main task of the IDF in "H2" is the protection of the Jewish community. This task is achieved through a number of security measures imposed on the Palestinian population, such as observation posts on rooftops, checkpoints, intensive identity checks, and restrictions of traffic. The IDF also maintains a tight supervision on construction and rehabilitation works. Similarly, the Israeli military administration can impose restrictions of use and military orders on private houses, public premises and infrastructure.

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Source: [Temporary International Presence in Hebron](#)

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### The Cave of Machpelah Tomb of the Patriarchs



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The **Cave of Machpelah** is the world's most ancient Jewish site and the second holiest place for the Jewish people, after [Temple Mount](#) in [Jerusalem](#). The cave and the adjoining field were purchased—at full market price—by [Abraham](#) some 3700 years ago. [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), [Jacob](#), [Sarah](#), [Rebecca](#), and [Leah](#) are all later buried in the same Cave of Machpelah. These are considered the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people. The only one who is missing is [Rachel](#), who was buried near [Bethlehem](#) where she died in childbirth.



The double cave, a mystery of thousands of years, was uncovered several years ago beneath the massive building, revealing artifacts from the Early Israelite Period (some 30 centuries ago). The structure was built during the [Second Temple Period](#) (about two thousand years ago) by [Herod](#), King of Judea, providing a place for gatherings and Jewish prayers at the graves of the Patriarchs.

This uniquely impressive building is the only one that stands intact and still fulfills its original function after thousands of years. Foreign conquerors and invaders used the site for their own purposes, depending on their religious orientation: the [Byzantines](#) and [Crusaders](#) transformed it into a church and the [Muslims](#) rendered it a mosque. About 700 years ago, the Muslim [Mamelukes](#) conquered Hebron, declared the structure a mosque and forbade entry to Jews, who were not allowed past the seventh step on a staircase outside the building.

Upon the liberation of [Hebron](#) in 1967, the Chief Rabbi of the [Israel Defense Forces](#), the late Major-General Rabbi Shlomo Goren, was the first Jew to enter the Cave of Machpelah. Since then, Jews have been struggling to regain their prayer rights at the site, still run by the Muslim Waqf (Religious Trust) that took control during the Arab conquest. Many restrictions are imposed on Jewish prayers and customs at the Tomb of the Patriarchs despite the site's significance, primacy and sanctity in Jewish heritage and history.

Over 300,000 people visit Ma'arat HaMachpelah annually. The structure is divided into three rooms: Ohel Avraham, Ohel Yitzhak, and Ohel Ya'akov. Presently Jews have no access to Ohel Yitzhak, the largest room, with the exception of 10 days a year.

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Source: [Jewish Community of Hebron](#) and other historical sources.

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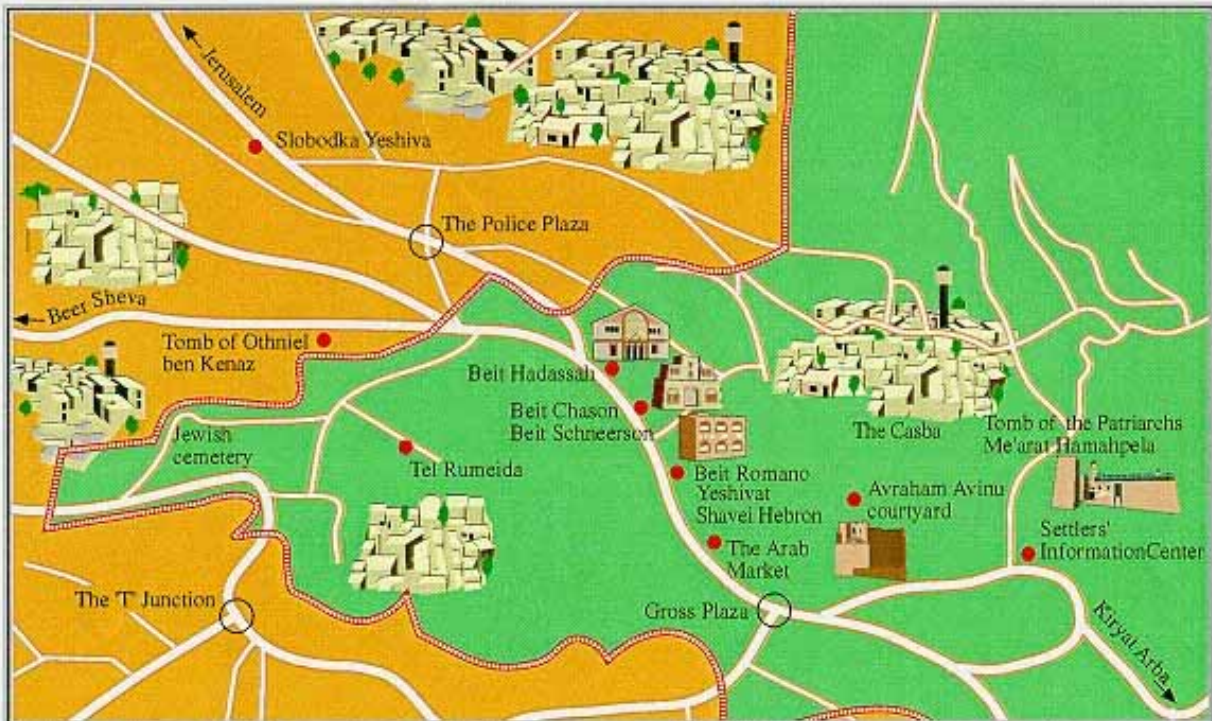
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## Hebron



[Hebron](#) — located south of [Jerusalem](#) in the Judean hills — is home to approximately 130,000 Arabs, 530 Jews, and three Christians. An additional 6,000 Jews reside in the adjacent community of [Kiryat Arba](#).

Hebron is the site of the oldest Jewish community in the world, which dates back to Biblical times. The [Book of Genesis](#) relates that [Abraham](#) purchased the field where the [Tomb of the Patriarchs](#) is located as a burial place for his wife Sarah. According to Jewish tradition, the Patriarchs [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and [Jacob](#), and the Matriarchs [Sarah](#), [Rebekah](#), and [Leah](#) are buried in the Tomb.

Hebron has a long and rich Jewish history. It was one of the first places where the Patriarch [Abraham](#) resided after his arrival in [Canaan](#). [King David](#) was anointed in Hebron, where he reigned for seven years. One thousand years later, during the first Jewish revolt against the [Romans](#), the city was the scene of extensive fighting. Jews lived in Hebron almost continuously throughout the [Byzantine](#), [Arab](#), [Mameluke](#), and [Ottoman](#) periods. It was only in 1929 — as a result of a murderous Arab [pogrom](#) in which 67 Jews were murdered and the remainder were forced to flee — that the city became

temporarily "free" of Jews. After the [1967 Six-Day War](#), the Jewish community of Hebron was re-established. It has grown to include a range of religious and educational institutions.

Hebron contains many sites of Jewish religious and historical significance, in addition to the [Tomb of the Patriarchs](#). These include the Tombs of Othniel Ben Kenaz (the first Judge of Israel) and Avner Ben Ner (general and confidante to Kings [Saul](#) and [David](#)), and Ruth and Jesse (great-grandmother and father, respectively, of King David). Victims of the 1929 pogrom, as well as prominent rabbinical sages and community figures, are buried in Hebron's ancient Jewish cemetery.

In recent years, Hebron has been the site of many violent incidents, two of which stand out. In May 1980, Palestinian terrorists murdered 6 Jewish yeshiva students and wounded 20 others, who were returning from prayers at the [Tomb of the Patriarchs](#). In February 1994, Dr. Baruch Goldstein opened fire on Muslim worshippers at the Tomb, murdering 29 and wounding 125.

After the signing of the [Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement](#) ("Oslo II"), authority for most civil affairs regarding Hebron's arab residents was transferred from the Israeli Civil Administration to the Palestinian Authority and the (Arab) Municipality of Hebron. Those services which remained the responsibility of the Civil Administration will be transferred following the [IDF](#) redeployment from Hebron. The IDF will retain sole responsibility for the security and well-being of Hebron's Jewish community.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Hebron (Al-Khalil in Arabic) is located 32 km. south of Jerusalem in the Judean hills, and sits between 870 and 1,020 meters above sea level. The city is built on several hills and nahals/wadis, most of which run north- to-south. Hebron's monthly average temperatures are lower than those of Jerusalem. The city receives approximately 466 millimeters average rainfall annually. Its climate has — since Biblical times — encouraged extensive local agriculture.

The Hebrew word "Hebron" is (inter alia) explained as being derived from the Hebrew word for "friend" ("haver"), a description for the Patriarch Abraham, who was considered to be the friend of God. The Arabic "Al- Khalil" — literally "the friend" — has a nearly identical derivation, and also refers to the Patriarch [Abraham](#) (Ibrahim), whom [Muslims](#) similarly describe as the friend of God.

Hebron has approximately 130,000 (Sunni Muslim) Arab residents. Hebron's Jewish population, comprised of 45 Jewish families and around 150 yeshiva students, is about 500. Hebron's three Christian residents are the custodians of the city's Russian church. An additional 6,000 Jews live in the adjacent community of Kiryat Arba.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: BIBLICAL PERIOD TO 1967

[Numbers 13:22](#) states that (Canaanite) Hebron was founded seven years before the Egyptian town of Zoan, i.e. around 1720 BCE, and the ancient (Canaanite and Israelite) city of Hebron was situated at Tel Rumeida. The city's history has been inseparably linked with the [Cave of Machpelah](#), which the Patriarch [Abraham](#) purchased from Ephron the [Hittite](#) for 400 silver shekels ([Genesis 23](#)), as a family tomb. As recorded in Genesis, the Patriarchs [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and [Jacob](#), and the Matriarchs [Sarah](#), [Rebekah](#) and [Leah](#), are buried there, and — according to a Jewish tradition — [Adam](#) and [Eve](#) are also buried there.

Hebron is mentioned 87 times in the Bible, and is the world's oldest Jewish community. Joshua assigned Hebron to Caleb from the tribe of Judah ([Joshua 14:13-14](#)), who subsequently led his tribe in conquering the city and its environs ([Judges 1:1-20](#)). As Joshua 14:15 notes, "the former name of Hebron was Kiryat Arba..."

Following the death of King Saul, God instructed David to go to Hebron, where he was anointed King of Judah ([II Samuel 2:1-4](#)). A little more than 7.5 years later, David was anointed King over all Israel, in Hebron ([II Samuel 5:1-3](#)).

The city was part of the united kingdom and — later — the southern Kingdom of [Judah](#), until the latter fell to the [Babylonians](#) in 586 BCE. Despite the loss of Jewish independence, Jews continued to live in Hebron ([Nehemiah 11:25](#)), and the city was later incorporated into the (Jewish) [Hasmonean](#) kingdom by [John Hyrcanus](#). King [Herod](#) (reigned 37-4 BCE) built the base of the present structure — the 12 meter high wall — over the [Tomb the Patriarchs](#).

The city was the scene of extensive fighting during the [Jewish Revolt](#) against the Romans (65-70, see [Josephus](#) 4:529, 554), but Jews continued to live there after the Revolt, through the later [Bar Kochba Revolt](#) (132-135 CE), and into the [Byzantine](#) period. The remains of a [synagogue](#) from the Byzantine period have been excavated in the city, and the Byzantines built a large church over the Tomb of the Patriarchs, incorporating the pre-existing Herodian structure.

Jews continued to live in Hebron after the city's conquest by the Arabs (in 638), whose generally tolerant rule was welcomed, especially after the often harsh Byzantine rule — although the Byzantines never forbade Jews from praying at the Tomb. The Arabs converted the Byzantine church at the [Tomb the Patriarchs](#) into a mosque.

Upon capturing the city in 1100, the Crusaders expelled the Jewish community, and converted the mosque at the Tomb back into a church. The Jewish community was re-established following the [Mamelukes'](#) conquest of the city in 1260, and the Mamelukes reconverted the church at the Tomb of the Patriarchs back into a mosque. However, the restored Islamic (Mameluke) ascendancy was less tolerant than the pre-Crusader Islamic (Arab) regimes — a 1266 decree barred Jews (and Christians) from entering the Tomb of the Patriarchs, allowing them only to ascend to the fifth, later the seventh, step outside the eastern wall. The Jewish cemetery -- on a hill west of the Tomb — was first mentioned in a letter dated to 1290.

The [Ottoman](#) Turks' conquest of the city in 1517 was marked by a violent pogrom which included many deaths, rapes, and the plundering of Jewish homes. The surviving Jews fled to Beirut and did not return until 1533. In 1540, Jewish exiles from [Spain](#) acquired the site of the "Court of the Jews" and built the Avraham Avinu ("Abraham Our Father") synagogue. (One year — according to local legend — when the requisite quorum for prayer was lacking, the Patriarch [Abraham](#) himself appeared to complete the quorum; hence, the name of the synagogue.)

Despite the events of 1517, its general poverty and a devastating plague in 1619, the Hebron Jewish community grew. Throughout the Turkish period (1517-1917), groups of Jews from other parts of the Land of Israel, and the [Diaspora](#), moved to Hebron from time to time, joining the existing community, and the city became a rabbinic center of note.

In 1775, the Hebron Jewish community was rocked by a blood libel, in which Jews were falsely accused of murdering the son of a local sheikh. The community -- which was largely sustained by donations from abroad -- was made to pay a crushing fine, which further worsened its already shaky economic situation. Despite its poverty, the community managed, in 1807, to purchase a 5-dunam plot



-- upon which the city's wholesale market stands today -- and after several years the sale was recognized by the Hebron Waqf. In 1811, 800 dunams of land were acquired to expand the cemetery. In 1817, the Jewish community numbered approximately 500, and by 1838, it had grown to 700, despite a pogrom which took place in 1834, during Mohammed Ali's rebellion against the Ottomans (1831-1840).

In 1870, a wealthy Turkish Jew, Haim Yisrael Romano, moved to Hebron and purchased a plot of land upon which his family built a large residence and guest house, which came to be called Beit Romano. The building later housed a synagogue and served as a yeshiva, before it was seized by the Turks. During the [Mandatory period](#), the building served the British administration as a police station, remand center, and court house.

In 1893, the building later known as [Beit Hadassah](#) was built by the Hebron Jewish community as a clinic, and a second floor was added in 1909. The American Zionist Hadassah organization contributed the salaries of the clinic's medical staff, who served both the city's Jewish and Arab populations.

During World War I, before the British occupation, the Jewish community suffered greatly under the wartime Turkish administration. Young men were forcibly conscripted into the Turkish army, overseas financial assistance was cut off, and the community was threatened by hunger and disease. However, with the establishment of the British administration in 1918, the community, reduced to 430 people, began to recover. In 1925, Rabbi Mordechai Epstein established a new yeshiva, and by 1929, the population had risen to 700 again.

On August 23, 1929, local Arabs devastated the Jewish community by perpetrating a vicious, large-scale, organized, [pogrom](#). According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*:

"The assault was well planned and its aim was well defined: the elimination of the Jewish settlement of Hebron. The rioters did not spare women, children, or the aged; the British gave passive assent. Sixty-seven were killed, 60 wounded, the community was destroyed, synagogues razed, and Torah scrolls burned."

A total of 59 of the 67 victims were buried in a common grave in the Jewish cemetery (including 23 who had been murdered in one house alone, and then dismembered), and the surviving Jews fled to Jerusalem. (During the violence, Haj Issa el-Kourdieh -- a local Arab who lived in a house in the Jewish Quarter -- sheltered 33 Jews in his basement and protected them from the rioting mob.) However, in 1931, 31 Jewish families returned to Hebron and re-established the community. This effort was short-lived, and in April 1936, fearing another massacre, the British authorities evacuated the community.

Following the [creation](#) of the State of Israel in 1948, and the invasion by Arab armies, Hebron was captured and occupied by the Jordanian Arab Legion. During the Jordanian occupation, which lasted until 1967, Jews were not permitted to live in the city, nor -- despite the [Armistice Agreement](#) -- to visit or pray at the Jewish holy sites in the city. Additionally, the Jordanian authorities and local residents undertook a systematic campaign to eliminate any evidence of the Jewish presence in the city. They razed the Jewish Quarter, desecrated the Jewish cemetery and built an animal pen on the ruins of the Avraham Avinu synagogue.

### III. HEBRON SINCE 1967

#### A. The Re-established Jewish community

Israel returned to Hebron in 1967. The old Jewish Quarter had been destroyed and the cemetery was devastated. Since 1968, the re-established Jewish community in Hebron itself has been linked to the

nearby community of [Kiryat Arba](#). On April 4, 1968, a group of Jews registered at the Park Hotel in the city. The next day they announced that they had come to re-establish Hebron's Jewish community. The actions sparked a nationwide debate and drew support from across the political spectrum. After an initial period of deliberation, Prime Minister [Levi Eshkol's](#) Labor-led government decided to temporarily move the group into a near-by [IDF](#) compound, while a new community -- to be called Kiryat Arba -- was built adjacent to Hebron. The first 105 housing units were ready in the autumn of 1972.

Today, [Kiryat Arba](#) has approximately 6,000 residents. Its built-up area comprises some 6,000 dunams, and is located about 750 meters from the Tomb at its nearest point. Kiryat Arba has its own elected local council, schools, religious and community institutions, clinics, and industrial/commercial zone. It draws its water from mains coming from the [Etzion Bloc](#) and the Herodion area to the north. About half of its residents work in [Jerusalem](#) and its environs; 30% are employed in local education, health, and administrative services, and the remaining 20% are employed in local tourism, industry, and commerce.

The Jewish community in Hebron itself was re-established permanently in April 1979, when a group of Jews from [Kiryat Arba](#) moved into [Beit Hadassah](#) (see page 2 above). Following a deadly terrorist attack in May 1980 in which six Jews returning from prayers at the [Tomb of the Patriarchs](#) were murdered, and 20 wounded (see Annex I below), Prime Minister [Menachem Begin's](#) Likud-led government agreed to refurbish [Beit Hadassah](#), and to permit Jews to move into the adjacent Beit Chason and Beit Schneerson, in the old Jewish Quarter. An additional floor was built on [Beit Hadassah](#), and 11 families moved in during 1986.

Since 1980, other Jewish properties and buildings in Hebron have been refurbished and rebuilt. Today the Hebron Jewish community comprises 19 families living in buildings adjacent to the Avraham Avinu courtyard (see page 2 above), the area also houses two kindergartens, the municipal committee offices, and a guesthouse; seven families living in mobile homes at Tel Rumeida; twelve families living in [Beit Hadassah](#); six families living in Beit Schneerson; one family living in Beit Kastel; six families live in Beit Chason; Beit Romano, home to the Shavei Hebron yeshiva, is currently being refurbished.

Local administration and services for the Hebron Jewish community are provided by the Hebron Municipal Committee, which was established by the Defense and Interior Ministries, and whose functions are similar to those of Israel's regular local councils. The Ministry of Housing and Construction has established the "Association for the Renewal of the Jewish Community in Hebron," to carry out projects in the city. The Association is funded both through the state budget and by private contributions. It deals with general development of, and for, the Jewish community.

In addition to the [Tomb of the Patriarchs](#), Tel Rumeida, the Jewish cemetery, and the historical residences mentioned above, other Jewish sites in Hebron include: 1) the Tomb of Ruth and Jesse (King David's father) which is located on a hillside overlooking the cemetery; 2) the site of the Terebinths of Mamre ("Alonei Mamre") from Genesis 18:1, where God appeared to [Abraham](#), which is located about 400 meters from the Glass Junction (Herodian, Roman, and Byzantine remains mark the site today); 3) King David's Pool (also known as the Sultan's Pool), which is located about 200 meters south of the road to the entrance of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, which Jews hold to be the pool referred to in II Samuel 4:12; 4) the Tomb of Abner, Saul and David's general, which is located near the Tomb, and 5) the Tomb of Othniel Ben Kenaz, the first Judge of Israel (Judges 3:9-11).

## **B. Security, and Hebron and the Peace Process**

According to the Oslo accords, the IDF has sole responsibility for the security of the Jewish

community of Hebron. However, it is the Israel Police which is responsible for investigating instances of possible violations of the law by Hebron's Jewish residents. Providing security for Hebron's Jewish residents is a particular challenge since Hebron's is the only Jewish community in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza which is situated directly in the midst of a city with a large Arab population. Moreover, the community is not concentrated in a single area or bloc, but is, rather, comprised of dispersed and separated sites. Terrorists could thus threaten one individual site, or isolate one site from the others by creating pressure on the roads (traffic jams, etc.) and thus impede the arrival of Israel security forces should one site be attacked, or could attack the roads joining the sites. Additionally, some of the sites are situated lower than the surrounding areas, and thus face clear threats.

Responsibility for security at the [Tomb of the Patriarchs](#) -- in accordance with the recommendations of the committee which investigated the massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers and the wounding of 125 by [Kiryat Arba](#) resident Baruch Goldstein on 25.02.94 -- is shared by the IDF (outside the Tomb) and a special Israel Police/Border Police unit (inside). Following the massacre and the publication of the committee's findings, it was decided to establish new prayer procedures which would enable both communities to exercise their religious rights as fully and freely as possible and would provide for the complete separation of Jewish and Muslim worshippers. In this context, a schedule of the religious holidays of both Jews and Muslims was established in which each community was allocated 10 days annually in which it would have exclusive access to the Tomb.

Following the signing of the [Interim Agreement](#) on September 28, 1995, authority over most civilian matters concerning Hebron's Arab residents was transferred from the IDF Civil Administration to the Palestinian Authority and/or the (Arab) Municipality of Hebron. Those services which remained the responsibility of the Civil Administration will be transferred to the Palestinian Authority and the Municipality following the IDF redeployment in Hebron.

The [Interim Agreement](#) provides for the stationing of a [Temporary International Presence in Hebron \(TIPH\)](#), whose sole function is to monitor and report on events. On October 10, 1996, Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed a joint letter requesting the Norwegian government to extend the operation of the current TIPH, composed of 30 Norwegian citizens.

## **ANNEX I: TERRORIST ATTACKS AND VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN HEBRON SINCE 1929**

(The following list is intended to provide a representative -- not exhaustive -- summary of terrorist attacks and violent incidents which have occurred in Hebron since 1929.)

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 23.08.29 | 67 Jews (including women, children, and the elderly) were murdered, and 60 injured in a vicious pogrom which had been well-planned by Arab rioters. In the course of the pogrom, women were raped, homes and synagogues were plundered and burned, and Torah scrolls were desecrated and burned. |
| 09.10.68 | A 17 year-old Arab youth threw a grenade at Jews praying on the steps of the Tomb's main gate. 47 Jews, including an eight month-old baby, were injured.   |
| 05.11.68 | A Jewish man and his son, an elderly Arab man, and three Arab children were injured by an explosive charge near the Tomb.  |



29.12.68	Terrorists attack a security post near the Tomb. One terrorist was killed; the others fled. No Israeli soldiers were injured.
07.08.76	Two Jews were wounded when terrorists shot at a tour bus in the city.
03.10.76	On the eve of Yom Kippur, a mob of Arab youths burst into the Tomb and desecrated several Torah scrolls. Three soldiers fired in the air in an attempt to prevent their entry. 61 rioters were arrested in the Tomb.
02.05.80	Arab terrorists ambushed a group of Jews returning from the Tomb to Beit Hadassah. Six Jews were murdered and 20 wounded.
21.05.80	A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Hebron. A Jewish woman was wounded.
02.06.80	11 Arabs, including four schoolchildren, were injured when a booby-trapped grenade exploded in the Hebron market.
16.12.80	An Arab resident of Hebron was wounded by a bomb at Glass Junction in Hebron.
10.02.81	A Jewish resident of Kiryat Arba was stabbed and wounded in the Hebron casbah.
07.07.83	Beit Romano Yeshiva student Aharon Gross was attacked and stabbed by three Arab youths in the market area. He later died of his wounds.
25.07.83	Jewish terrorists opened fire at the Islamic College in Hebron. Three students were murdered and approximately 30 wounded.
10.08.85	A Jewish resident of Kiryat Arba was stabbed and wounded in the Hebron casbah.
25.04.86	A 16-year old Jewish youth was stabbed and lightly wounded in the casbah.
06.06.86	A Jewish resident of Kiryat Arba was stabbed and wounded in the casbah.
14.09.86	A young Arab woman, the daughter of a local mukhtar, stabbed a soldier at the entrance to the Tomb. She was shot and killed.
16.10.86	A Jewish resident of Kiryat Arba was stabbed in the city.
25.10.92	Three Arab terrorists shot at soldiers guarding the Tomb's generator. One reserve soldier was murdered; two were wounded.
28.05.93	Yeshiva student Erez Shmuel was stabbed to death approximately 500 meters from the Tomb, while on his way to Friday evening prayers at the Tomb.
06.12.93	Mordechai Lapid and his son Shalom were shot to death near Glass Junction in Hebron. Hamas claimed responsibility.
25.02.94	Kiryat Arba resident Baruch Goldstein opened fire on Muslim worshippers inside the Tomb, murdering 29 and wounding 125.
07.07.94	Sarit Prigal (17) was shot to death in a drive-by shooting, when terrorists opened fire from a passing car near the entrance to Kiryat Arba.
19.03.95	Nahum Hoss (31) of Hebron, and Yehuda Partus (34) of Kiryat Arba, were murdered by shots fired at their bus from a terrorist ambush near Glass Junction in Hebron. Six others were injured.

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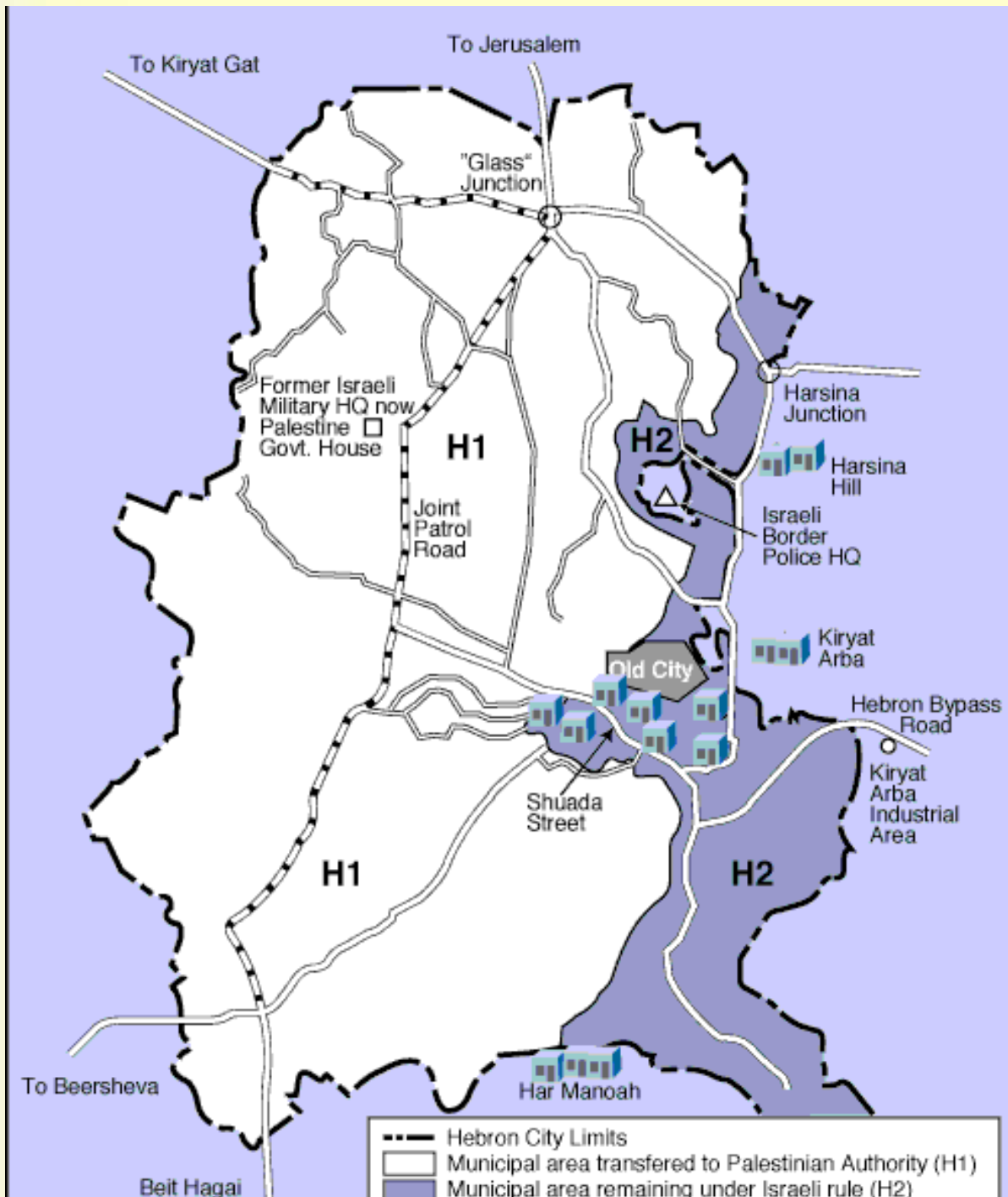
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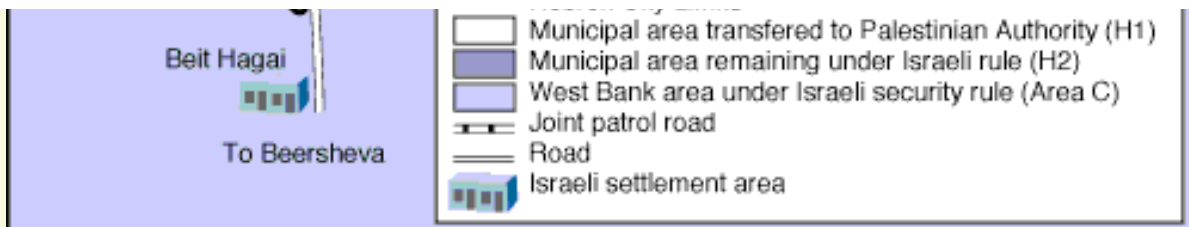
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## Hebron 2000





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## The Hebron Massacre of 1929

by Shira Schoenberg

For some time, the 800 Jews in Hebron lived in peace with their tens of thousands of Arab neighbors. But on the night of August 23, 1929, the tension simmering within this cauldron of nationalities bubbled over, and for 3 days, Hebron turned into a city of terror and murder. By the time the massacres ended, 67 Jews lay dead and the survivors were relocated to [Jerusalem](#), leaving Hebron barren of Jews for the first time in hundreds of years.

The summer of 1929 was one of unrest in Palestine. Jewish-Arab tensions were spurred on by the agitation of the [mufti](#) in [Jerusalem](#). Just one day prior to the start of the Hebron massacre, three Jews and three Arabs were killed in [Jerusalem](#) when fighting broke out after a Muslim prayer service on the Temple Mount. Arabs spread false rumors throughout their communities, saying that Jews were carrying out "wholesale killings of Arabs." Meanwhile, Jewish [immigrants](#) were arriving in Palestine in increasing numbers, further exacerbating the Jewish-Arab conflict.

Hebron had, until this time, been outwardly peaceful, although tension hid below the surface. The Sephardi Jewish community in Hebron had lived quietly with its Arab neighbors for centuries. The Sephardi Jews (Jews who were originally from Spain, North Africa and Arab countries) spoke Arabic and had a cultural connection to their Arab neighbors. In the mid-1800s, Ashkenazi (native European) Jews started moving to Hebron and, in 1925, the Slobodka Yeshiva, officially the Yeshiva of Hebron, Knesset Yisrael-Slobodka, was opened. Yeshiva students lived separately from the

Sephardi community, and from the Arab population. Due to this isolation, the Arabs viewed them with suspicion and hatred, and identified them as Zionist immigrants. Despite the general suspicion, however, one yeshiva student, Dov Cohen, still recalled being on "very good" terms with the Arab neighbors. He remembered yeshiva boys taking long walks late at night on the outskirts of the city, and not feeling afraid, even though only one British policeman guarded the entire city.

On Friday, August 23, 1929, that tranquility was lost. Arab youths started throwing rocks at the yeshiva students. That afternoon, one student, Shmuel Rosenholtz, went to the yeshiva alone. Arab rioters later broke in and killed him, and that was only the beginning.

Friday night, Rabbi Ya'acov Slonim's son invited any fearful Jews to stay in his house. The rabbi was highly regarded in the community, and he had a gun. Many Jews took him up on this offer, and many Jews were eventually murdered there.

As early as 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, Arabs began to gather en masse. They came in mobs, armed with clubs, knives and axes. While the women and children threw stones, the men ransacked Jewish houses and destroyed Jewish property. With only a single police officer in Hebron, the Arabs entered Jewish courtyards with no opposition.

Rabbi Slonim, who had tried to shelter the Jewish population, was approached by the rioters and offered a deal. If all the Ashkenazi yeshiva students were given over to the Arabs, the rioters would spare the lives of the Sephardi community. Rabbi Slonim refused to turn over the students and was killed on the spot. In the end, 12 Sephardi Jews and 55 Ashkenazi Jews were murdered.

A few Arabs did try to help the Jews. Nineteen Arab families saved dozens, maybe even hundreds of Jews. Zmira Mani wrote about an Arab named Abu Id Zaitoun who brought his brother and son to rescue her and her family. The Arab family protected the Manis with their swords, hid them in a cellar along with other Jews who they had saved, and found a policeman to escort them safely to the police station at Beit Romano.

The police station turned into a shelter for the Jews that morning of August 24. It also became a synagogue as the Orthodox Jews gathered there and said their morning prayers. As they finished praying, they began to hear noises outside the building. Thousands of Arabs descended from



Har Hebron, shouting "Kill the Jews!" in Arabic. They even tried to break down the doors of the station.

The Jews were besieged in Beit Romano for three days. Each night, ten men were allowed to leave to attend a funeral in Hebron's ancient Jewish cemetery for the murdered Jews of the day.

When the massacre finally ended, the surviving Jews were forced to leave their home city and resettled in [Jerusalem](#). Some Jewish families tried to move back to Hebron, but were removed by the British authorities in 1936 at the start of the [Arab revolt](#). In 1948, the [War of Independence](#) granted Israel statehood, but further cut the Jews off from Hebron, a city that was captured by King Abdullah's Arab Legion and ultimately annexed to Jordan.

When Jews finally gained control of the city in 1967, a small number of massacre survivors again tried to reclaim their old houses. Then defense minister [Moshe Dayan](#) supposedly told the survivors that if they returned, they would be arrested, and that they should be patient while the government worked out a solution to get their houses back. Years later, settlers moved to parts of Hebron without the permission of the government, but for those massacre survivors still seeking their original homes, that solution never came.

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Sources: [Arutz Sheva](#), Interview with Rabbi Dov Cohen, (August 1, 1999). Ben-David, Calev, "To live and die in Hebron," [The Jerusalem Post](#), (July 23, 1999). See also: [Hebron](#).

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## The Hebron Protocol

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- [Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron \(1/17/97\)](#)
- [Note for the Record](#)
- [Agreed Minute](#)
- [Letter to be provided by US Secretary of State Christopher to Benjamin Netanyahu at the time of signing of the Hebron Protocol](#)

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## Kiryat Arba



Kiryat Arba is a suburb of Hebron, five minutes from the [Cave of Machpela](#) and the heart of the city. Established in 1971, Kiryat Arba was the first renewed Jewish community in Judea and Samaria. Today, Kiryat Arba is home to more than 6,000 Jews. The town has educational institutions from prenursery school through post-High school, modern medical facilities, shopping centers, a bank and post office.

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Source: [Hebron](#).

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# Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron

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- [Agreement on Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron \(1/30/97\)](#)
- [Hebron](#)
- [History of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron](#)
- [Mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron](#)
- [Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Temporary International Presence in Hebron \(1/30/97\)](#)
- [Structure and Organization of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron](#)

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# A Muslim Scholar Speaks on Islam & Jerusalem

by Shaykh Professor Abdul Hadi Palazzi

For a [Jew](#) or a [Muslim](#), religious or secular, thinking of [Jerusalem](#) means to feel reason and sentiment mingled together. So, as a Muslim scholar and a man of religion, it is today worthwhile for me to try to determine whether, from an Islamic point of view, there is some well-grounded theological reason that makes recognizing Jerusalem both as an Islamic holy place and as the capital of the [State of Israel](#) impossible.

The idea of Islam as a factor that prevents Arabs from recognizing any sovereign right of Jews over the Land of Israel or Jerusalem is quite recent and can by no means be found in Islamic classical sources. Both [Qur'an](#) and [Torah](#) indicate quite clearly that the link between the Jews and the Land of Israel does not depend on any kind of colonization project but directly on the will of God Almighty. In particular, both Jewish and Islamic Scriptures state specifically that God through His chosen servant [Moses](#) decided to free the offspring of [Jacob](#) from slavery in [Egypt](#) and to make them the inheritors of the Promised Land.

The Qur'an cites the exact words with which Moses ordered the Israelites to conquer the Land:

"And (remember) when Moses said to his people: 'O my people, call in remembrance the favour of God unto you, when he produced prophets among you, made you kings, and gave to you what He had not given to any other among



the people. O my people, enter the Holy Land which God has assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown, to your own ruin". (Qur'an, Sura 5:22-23, "The Table")

The Holy Qur'an also quite openly refers to the reinstatement of the Children of Israel in the Land before the Last Judgment, where it says "And thereafter We said to the Children of Israel: 'Dwell securely in the Promised Land.' And when the last warning will come to pass, We will gather you together in a mingled crowd." (Qur'an, Sura 17:104, "The Night Journey")

As concerns Jerusalem, the most common argument against Islamic acceptance of Israeli sovereignty over the Holy City is that, since it is a holy place for Muslims, its being ruled by non-Muslims would be a betrayal of Islam.

The designation of Jerusalem as an Islamic holy place depends on al-Mi'raj, the Ascension of the [Prophet Muhammad](#) to heaven, which began from the Foundation Stone on the [Temple Mount](#). But while remembering this, we must admit that there is no real link between al-Mi'raj and sovereign rights over Jerusalem, since when al-Mi'raj took place the city was not under Islamic but under alternate [Byzantine](#) or Sassanid administration.

Moreover, the Qur'an expressly recognizes that Jerusalem plays the same role for Jews that Mecca has for Muslims. We read: "They would not follow thy direction of prayer (qibla), nor art thou to follow their direction of prayer; nor indeed will they follow each other's direction of prayer...." (Qur'an, Sura 2:145, "The Cow") All Qur'anic commentators explain that "thy qibla" is obviously the Kaba of Mecca, while "their qibla" refers to the Temple Mount Area in Jerusalem. Some Muslim exegetes also quote the Book of Daniel as proof of this ([Daniel 6:10](#)).

Thus, as no one wishes to deny Muslims complete sovereignty over Mecca, from an Islamic point of view there is no sound theological reason to deny the Jews the same right over Jerusalem.

As to Jewish-Muslim relationships, if we reflect on the level of inter-religious dialogue in past centuries, we must frankly admit that in this respect we have been moving backwards. From a theological point of view, dialogue between Jews and Muslims is easier than, say, dialogue



between Jews and Christians. Indeed, dialogue between Jews and Muslims was much more extensive in the past. [Ibn Gabirol](#) (Avicembro), [Maimonides](#), Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) were not isolated intellectuals but part of an ongoing intercommunication and shared well of knowledge.

One can blame the current separation on the political situation, but that does not free intellectuals and men of religion of their responsibility. Today, looking toward the future, we must again create the same kind of intellectual atmosphere, until it is common for Islamic theologians to read [Buber](#) and Levinas, and for Jewish scholars to study the works of Sha'rawi and Ashmawi. We can understand the common features in the development of [Kabbalah](#) and Tasawwuf, or study the mutual influence of Jewish Halakhah and Islamic Sharia.

Jewish intellectuals, for their part, must be ready to understand that a new attitude is emerging among some Islamic thinkers. Many of us are now ready to admit that hostility for Israel has been a great mistake, perhaps the worst mistake Muslims have made in the last 50 years.

For those Muslim leaders who live in democratic countries, this declaration is not so dangerous. Even in the more oppressed countries, there is a certain part of the educated population that does not blindly accept the local view. It is very important for us to verify that we are not alone in this activity; we must know that there is someone else who appreciates and shares our goals.

The times are ready for Jews and Muslims to recognize each other once again as a branch of the tree of monotheism, as brothers descended from the same father - Abraham, the forerunner of faith in the Living God. The more we discover our common roots, the more we can hope for a common future of peace and prosperity.

*Shaykh Professor Abdul Hadi Palazzi is Secretary General of the [Italian Muslim Association](#) and Muslim Chair of the Islam-Israel Fellowship of the [Root & Branch Association](#) ([www.rb.org.il](http://www.rb.org.il)). He was educated in Rome and in Cairo, where he received his "ijaza" (authorization to teach Islam) from Shaykh Ismail al-Khalwati and Sheikh Husayn al-Khalwati, and holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Sciences by decree of former Saudi Grand Mufti Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz.*

Source: [OLAM.org](http://OLAM.org)

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# Absentees' Property (Compensation) Law, 5733-1973

(July 1, 1973)

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*The draft law was presented to the Knesset on 9 January 1973. It became a law on 1 July 1973. The purpose of the law is to pay compensation to every resident of Israel, whether of East Jerusalem or elsewhere in the country. Compensation will be paid in respect only of land, wherever situated, in the State of Israel. The law is concerned with providing a solution for one important part of the larger problem of the Arab refugees. The following is from a Ministry of Justice Press Release, August 12, 1973.*

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### The Main Provisions of the Law

1. The persons entitled to compensation are all those who were Israel residents on 1 July 1973, or became residents thereafter, and prior to the property becoming vested in the Custodian of Absentees' Property were

- a. the owners of property, including their heirs, or
- b. the tenants only of urban property, including spouses living with them at the last mentioned date, or
- c. the lessees of property, or
- d. the owners of any easement in property.

2. The criteria for determining the value of property have been adopted from the Palestine Conciliation Commission of 1961. Accordingly, in respect of urban property the base figure is the net annual value on 29

November 1947 as last determined before that date for the purpose of urban property tax. In order to allow for the fact that net annual value is always set at a very low figure, an addition of a sum ranging from 30% to 60% (depending on the date of the last pre-1947 assessment) of the net annual value will be made. Since the original values were given in pounds sterling, the resulting figure will be multiplied by 175 to yield its equivalent in Israel lira of today. As regards agricultural property, the present-day value will be determined according to its classification for the purpose of rural property tax; the fourteen or so categories with their value per dunam are specified in the Schedule to the Law.

All sums properly paid by the Custodian of Absentees' Property on behalf of an owner will be deducted from the compensation.

Tenants of urban property will generally receive 15% of the value of the property as ascertained for the purpose of compensation. A lessee will receive such compensation as is found to be the value of his rights in the property.

3. Claims for compensation must be submitted before 30 June 1976 in the manner and form to be prescribed by regulation. If a person becomes an Israel resident after 1 July 1973, the claim may be submitted within two years thereafter, if that goes beyond 30 June 1976.

An advisory committee is to be set up, under the chairmanship of a Magistrate, to advise the Officer in Charge as to the rights of claimants, the determination of the annual value and the amount of compensation. In the event of any dispute over the decision of the Officer in Charge as to the right to compensation or the amount thereof, either the claimant or the Attorney General have a right of recourse to the District Court within six months after the Officer has given notice of his decision.

These legal proceedings are exempt from court fees. The fees of lawyers dealing with compensation claims are expressly restricted by the Law to certain maximum percentages; payments made in excess of the permitted rates may be recovered in civil proceedings and any person receiving any excess is liable to be fined five times the amount of the excess and, if a lawyer, may be open to professional disciplinary proceedings.

4. After compensation has been finally determined, the first IL 10,000 thereof will be paid in cash not later than 1 July 1975 or within six days after final determination whichever is the later, and the balance will be

discharged by the issue of government bonds within six months after final determination. The bonds will be registered in the name of the recipient with the Bank of Israel, but, from 1 April 1980, will be negotiable as if they were bearer bonds. They will be repayable in 15 equal annual instalments, with accruing interest at the rate of 4% on 1 October of each year commencing in 1975, although the Minister of Finance, with the approval of the Knesset Finance Committee, may direct earlier payment if that is required for rehabilitating or rehousing the claimant. Capital and interest will be linked with the cost-of-living index. Bonds will be exempt from stamp duty.

The foregoing applies to owners of property. Payment for compensation to other claimants is generally to be made before 1 July 1975 or within six months after final settlement of the claim, whichever is the later.

5. The Ministers of Finance and Justice are responsible for implementing the Law. The Minister of Justice may make regulations regarding procedures for making claims and the manner of dealing with them.

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Source: [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Architecture of Jerusalem

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- [Jerusalem Architecture Since 1948](#)
- [Jerusalem: Christian Architecture through the Ages](#)
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## Armon Hanatziv Promenade

The Armon Hanatziv Promenade overlooks most of [Jerusalem](#) and offers a beautiful view of the city. The promenade is one of the more successful projects initiated by former mayor [Teddy Kollek](#) under the auspices of the Jerusalem Foundation.

Armon Hanatziv means the Commissioner's Palace. The name is a bygone of another era, when the British High Commissioner's house, was down the road. The house was later used, after 1948, as the headquarters for [UN](#) observers.

The promenade, which is about two-thirds of a mile long (one kilometer), is at the southern end of the city, viewing northwards, you can see on the left, (westwards), [new Jewish Jerusalem](#); straight ahead, the [Old City](#), Mount Zion, and the three valleys which surround ancient Jerusalem, i.e. Tyropean, Hinnom and Kidron.

Beyond the Old City to the north is French Hill and Mount Scopus. To the East you can see the [Mount of Olives](#), with it's three hallmark towers on the crest, and beyond it the Judean wilderness. Way off the right is "the hill of evil counsel," or the governor's mansion, now a UN enclave.

At the very end of the promenade there is a lovely little restaurant, called the Taverna, which is accessible from Naomi Street in the Abu Tor neighborhood.

To get the promenade by car, find the Jerusalem train station, across the road from Liberty Bell Garden. Drive around the bend in front of the

station to the traffic light at the intersection. Make a right onto Hebron Road and continue southwards through several lights, about four blocks. Turn left off Hebron road at the sign for the Haas Promenade (East Talpiot) and continue straight down to the end of the street to the parking lot.

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# Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel

(July 30, 1980)

1. Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.
2. Jerusalem is the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court.
3. The Holy Places shall be protected from desecration and any other violation and from anything likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings towards those places.
  - a. The Government shall provide for the development and prosperity of Jerusalem and the well-being of its inhabitants by allocation of special funds, including a special annual grant to the Municipality of Jerusalem (Capital City Grant) with the approval of the Finance Committee of the Knesset.
  - b. Jerusalem shall be given special priority in the activities of the authorities of the State so as to further its development in economic and other matters.
  - c. The Government shall set up a special body or special

bodies for the implementation of this section.

MENACHEM BEGIN  
Prime Minister

YITZCHAK NAVON  
President of the State

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## Eating in Jerusalem

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- [The First Temple Period](#)
- [The Mameluke Period](#)
- [The Medieval Crusader Period](#)

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## Ein Kerem

Archeological excavations in the early 1940's uncovered remains of a settlement from the Middle Bronze Period (third millenium [BCE](#)), pottery from the first century BCE, and pagan cult statues from [Roman](#) times. Ancient tradition, dating back from Theodosius (530 [CE](#))



**Church of Saint John the Baptist**

identifies Ein Kerem as the birth place of John the Baptist, and with the location of the visit paid to Elizabeth, John's mother by her cousin Mary, [Jesus'](#) mother ([Luke 1:39-80](#)). The village's historical fame rests primamrily on this fact. A church stood there from [Byzantine](#) times and was visited by the author of the *Kalendarium Hierosolymitanum*. The [crusaders](#) also occupied the village and built a large church, soon destroyed in the eleventh century. The Russian Abbot Daniel wrote (1106-07) of two churches in Ein Kerem. The Franciscans established their first church in 1621, establishing a more permanent settlement in 1674. Medieval travelers, whose pilgrimage route usually followed the triangle Jerusalem-Ein Kerem-Bethlehem, wrote of the Church of Saint John and the Church of the Visitation.

The Franciscans remained the only foreigners in Ein Kerem until the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1860, the sisters of Our Lady of Zion settled in the village, to be followed by the nuns of the [Russian Orthodox](#)





### **Chagall Windows**

Kerem Agricultural School, moving it from its previous location in [Jerusalem](#). In 1964, many artists and academics settled in the village.

Today, Ein Kerem is most well known for its prestigious Hadassah Hospital, established in 1961, which also is home to the famous twelve [Marc Chagall](#) stained glass windows.

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Sources: "Ein Kerem." [Encyclopedia Judaica](#); [Hadassah Medical Organization](#)

Photo of Chagall windows courtesy [Trivia One](#)

Photo of Church courtesy [Biblical Resources Study Center](#)

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## Jerusalem History

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- [The Bar-Kokhba Revolt](#)
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## Israel Strengthens Jerusalem

On June 21, 1998, the Israeli Cabinet adopted a plan to strengthen Jerusalem and ensure its unity while countering the PLO's effort to divide the city. The decision is entirely consistent with the peace process and in no way violates the Oslo Accords, changes the status quo of the West Bank or the status of the Palestinians in the city or territories.

This plan is dedicated entirely to maintaining the demographic balance in Jerusalem between Arabs and Jews to ensure a united Jerusalem as Israel's capital, improve municipal services within the Jerusalem metropolitan area and boost the city's economy. Nothing in this decision will adversely affect the Arab population of Jerusalem, which is rapidly increasing while the Jewish population is declining.

More specifically, the plan aims to:

- Strengthen Jerusalem and ensure its unity and counter PLO efforts to divide it.
- Improve municipal services within the Jerusalem metropolitan area.
- Boost the city's economy.
- Promote high-tech business and academic studies in Jerusalem.
- Help reduce the gap between housing prices in Jerusalem and other cities.
- Improve the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem train system.
- Create a comprehensive public transportation system in the city.
- Plan additional improvements in the Jerusalem infrastructure.
- Maintain a demographic balance between Arabs and Jews.
- Improve the quality of life for Jerusalem residents, Arabs and Jews alike.
- Expands Jerusalem's municipal jurisdiction only to the west

covering Jewish towns within pre-1967 Israel.

The plan **does not**:

- Impact the peace process
- Violate Oslo's ban on changing the status of the West Bank
- Involve annexation of West Bank land
- Change the status of any settlements or political status of the area

Under this plan, Israel will not be violating any agreements with the Palestinians. Oslo does not restrict Israel's activities within Jerusalem and nothing in this decision will adversely affect the lives of the city's Arab population.

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## Jerusalem

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When you drive up the main road from the airport and Tel Aviv into the mountains, you might expect some major landmark to welcome you to [Jerusalem](#), but it's not like crossing the Golden Gate Bridge to enter San Francisco, spying the Empire State Building on the way to Manhattan, riding down the Champs-Élysées into the heart of Paris or taking the vaporetto across a canal into Venice. The entrance to Jerusalem is more abrupt; one minute you're on the highway and the next you've been transported to a different world. Almost immediately you find yourself on narrow streets with low-level buildings, many dating back decades. The sidewalks are typically filled with people scurrying about, [hasidim](#) in their distinctive garb, students dressed like students anywhere, soldiers with guns casually slung over one soldier and a knapsack over the other. The unparalleled mixture of the ancient and modern, the secular and religious is apparent at once. You feel that something is different and, intellectually and spiritually, you know this is a place unlike any other.

One of its many unique qualities is that [Jerusalem](#) almost completely shuts down on [Shabbat](#). This is a time of incredible quiet, like nothing you can



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experience in any other major city, when the observant Jews head for the [Western Wall](#), [synagogues](#) and family gatherings, and less observant Jews enjoy their one day off from work, spend the day with their families, relax and take in the breathtaking beauty of the city. A handful of restaurants stay open and people still roam the streets, but most activity ends mid-day Friday and doesn't pick up again until after dark on Saturday.

[Jerusalem](#) is the largest city in Israel and the nation's capital. It is a place where you can have fun, but it is more spiritual than spirited. Of course, sometimes the spirit moves people a little too far. In fact, psychologists have identified something they call the "[Jerusalem syndrome](#)" to describe people who become so intoxicated with the city they act irrationally, sometimes to the point of believing themselves to be the [messiah](#).

For purposes of this tour, we've divided the city into four sections. The first offers an overview of the city's long and rich [history](#). This includes a discussion of the current controversy over the future of the city.

The next stop is the [Old City](#), roughly 220 acres surrounded by walls built by [Suleiman the Magnificent](#) in the 16th century. This is the heart of the city and has both political and religious significance. The Old City is divided into quarters — [Jewish](#), Armenian, [Muslim](#) and [Christian](#). The holiest place for Jews is the [Western Wall](#) in the Jewish Quarter. Two of Islam's most important shrines, the [Dome of the Rock](#) and [al-Aksa Mosque](#) are in the Muslim Quarter on the [Temple Mount](#). The [Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#) in the Christian Quarter is revered by Christians as the site of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here you can imagine life centuries ago and even walk on original 2,000-year-old stones.

The [neighborhoods beyond the Old City walls](#) include [Yemin Moshe](#), the first Jewish neighborhood built outside the walls, which is identifiable by its distinctive – and unusable – windmill; [Mount Scopus](#), home of the Hebrew University; the [Mount of Olives](#), the site of several important Christian shrines and the cemetery where Jews have buried their dead for centuries and [Mea She'arim](#), an island in time where ultra-Orthodox Jews dress and behave in traditional ways and strictly observe Jewish law.

The "[new](#)" city is the more modern part of Jerusalem that was mostly built after Jordan occupied the Old City and the rest of the eastern half of the city following the [1948 war](#). This is where Israel has established most of its

government offices, including the [Knesset](#) and the magnificent new Supreme Court building. It is also where you can find the world-renowned [Hadassah Hospital](#), with its famous Chagall windows; [Mt. Herzl](#), the final resting place of most of Israel's leaders and [Yad Vashem](#), Israel museum and memorial to the Holocaust. Most visitors stay in this part of the city, which also has beautiful parks and a lively downtown with clubs, shops and restaurants.

For believers, this is the place where the call to God is a local one. For everyone else, it is a place of great beauty and [history](#) that is unlike anywhere else on earth.

- [History](#)
- [The Old City](#)
- [Beyond the Old City Walls](#)
- [The "New" City](#)

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## Jerusalem — An Introduction



By Mitchell Bard

Ever since [King David](#) made [Jerusalem](#) the capital of Israel 3,000 years ago, the city has played a central role in Jewish existence. The [Western Wall](#) in the [Old City](#) — the last remaining wall of the ancient [Jewish Temple](#), the holiest site in [Judaism](#) — is the object of Jewish veneration and the focus of Jewish prayer. Three times a day for thousands of years Jews have prayed "To Jerusalem, thy city, shall we return with joy," and have repeated the Psalmist's oath: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

By contrast, Jerusalem was never the capital of any Arab entity. In fact, it was a backwater for most of Arab history. Jerusalem never served as a provincial capital under [Muslim rule](#) nor was it ever a Muslim cultural center. For Jews, the entire city is sacred, but Muslims revere a site — the [Dome of the Rock](#) — not the city. "To a Muslim," observed British writer Christopher Sykes, "there is a profound difference between Jerusalem and Mecca or Medina. The latter are holy places containing holy sites." Besides the Dome of the Rock, he noted, Jerusalem has no major Islamic significance.

Meanwhile, Jews have been living in [Jerusalem](#) continuously for nearly two millennia. They have constituted the largest single group of inhabitants there since the 1840's ([map of Jerusalem in 1912](#)). Today, the total population of [Jerusalem](#) is approximately 662,000. The Jewish population in areas formerly controlled by [Jordan](#) exceeds 160,000, outnumbering Palestinians in "Arab"

Jerusalem.

## JERUSALEM'S POPULATION

Year	Jews	Muslims	Christians	Total
1844	7,120	5,000	3,390	15,510
1876	12,000	7,560	5,470	25,030
1896	28,112	8,560	8,748	45,420
1922	33,971	13,411	4,699	52,081
1931	51,222	19,894	19,335	90,451
1948	100,000	40,000	25,000	165,000
1967	195,700	54,963	12,646	263,309
1987	340,000	121,000	14,000	475,000
1990	378,200	131,800	14,400	524,400
2000	530,400	204,100	14,700	758,300

### A City Divided

When the [United Nations](#) took up the Palestine question in 1947, it recommended that all of [Jerusalem](#) be internationalized. The Vatican and many predominantly Catholic delegations pushed for this status, but a key reason for the UN decision was the Soviet Bloc's desire to embarrass Transjordan's King Abdullah and his British patrons.

The Jewish Agency, after much soul-searching, agreed to accept internationalization in the hope that in the short-run it would protect the city from bloodshed and the new state from conflict. Since the partition resolution called for a referendum on the city's status after 10 years, and Jews comprised a substantial majority, the expectation was that the city would later be incorporated into Israel. The Arab states were as bitterly opposed to the internationalization of [Jerusalem](#) as they were to the rest of the [partition plan](#). Prime Minister [David Ben-Gurion](#), subsequently, declared that Israel would no longer accept the internationalization of [Jerusalem](#).

In [May 1948](#), Jordan invaded and occupied east Jerusalem, dividing the city for the first time in its history, and driving thousands of Jews—whose families had lived in the city for centuries—into exile. For the next 19 years, the city was split, with Israel establishing its capital in western Jerusalem and Jordan occupying the eastern section, which included the Old City and most religious shrines.

The Arab refusal to accept partition "played a role in the juridical definition of Jerusalem's status,"

according to former Jerusalem [Mayor Teddy Kollek](#). After the Arab states' rejection of [UN Resolution 181](#) and, on December 11, 1948, [UN Resolution 194](#), establishing the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine, Prime Minister [David Ben-Gurion](#) declared that Israel would no longer accept the internationalization of [Jerusalem](#).

In 1950, [Jordan](#) annexed all the territory it occupied west of the [Jordan](#) River, including east [Jerusalem](#). The other Arab countries denied formal recognition of the Jordanian move, and the [Arab League](#) considered expelling [Jordan](#) from membership. Eventually, a compromise was worked out by which the other Arab governments agreed to view all the West Bank and east [Jerusalem](#) as held "in trust" by [Jordan](#) for the Palestinians.

From 1948-67, the city was divided between Israel and [Jordan](#). Israel made western [Jerusalem](#) its capital; [Jordan](#) occupied the eastern section. Because [Jordan](#) — like all the Arab states at the time — maintained a state of war with Israel, the city became, in essence, two armed camps, replete with concrete walls and bunkers, barbed-wire fences, minefields and other military fortifications.

In violation of the [1949 Armistice Agreement](#), [Jordan](#) denied Israelis access to the [Temple Wall](#) and to the cemetery on the [Mount of Olives](#), where Jews have been burying their dead for 2,500 years. [Jordan](#) actually went further and desecrated Jewish holy places. [King Hussein](#) permitted the construction of a road to the Intercontinental Hotel across the Mount of Olives cemetery. Hundreds of Jewish graves were destroyed by a highway that could have easily been built elsewhere. The gravestones, honoring the memory of rabbis and sages, were used by the engineer corps of the Jordanian Arab Legion as pavement and latrines in army camps (inscriptions on the stones were still visible when Israel liberated the city). The ancient Jewish Quarter of the Old City was ravaged, 58 [Jerusalem](#) synagogues — some centuries old — were destroyed or ruined, others were turned into stables and chicken coops. Slum dwellings were built abutting the [Western Wall](#).

Jews were not the only ones who found their freedom impeded. Under Jordanian rule, Israeli Christians were subjected to various restrictions, with only limited numbers allowed to visit the Old City and Bethlehem at Christmas and Easter. [Jordan](#) also passed laws imposing strict government control on Christian schools, including restrictions on the opening of new schools; state controls over school finances and appointment of teachers and requirements that the Koran be taught. Christian religious and charitable institutions were also barred from purchasing real estate in [Jerusalem](#). Because of these repressive policies, many Christians emigrated from [Jerusalem](#), leading their numbers to dwindle from 25,000 in 1949 to less than 13,000 in June 1967.

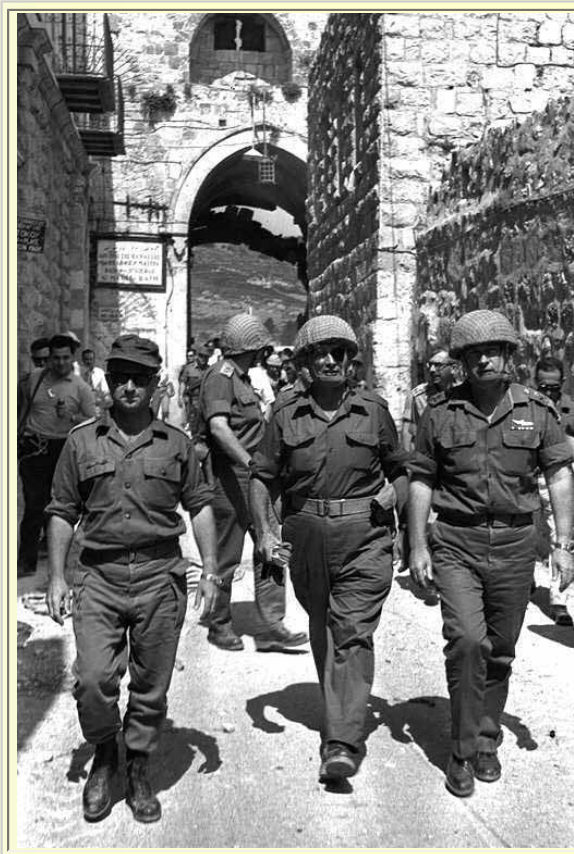
## Jerusalem is Unified

In 1967, [Jordan](#) ignored Israeli pleas to stay out of the [Six-Day War](#) and attacked the western part of the city. The Jordanians were routed by Israeli forces and driven out of east [Jerusalem](#), allowing the city's unity to be restored. [Teddy Kollek](#), [Jerusalem's](#) mayor for 28 years, called the reunification of the city "the practical realization of the [Zionist movement's](#) goals."

**Defense Minister Moshe Dayan (c), Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin (r), and Jerusalem Commander Uzi Narkiss ([GPO Photo](#))**

As had been the case under previous Islamic rulers, [King Hussein](#) had neglected [Jerusalem](#). The scope of his disregard became clear when Israel discovered that much of the city lacked even the most basic municipal services—a steady water supply, plumbing and electricity. As a result of reunification, these and other badly





needed municipal services were extended to Arab homes and businesses in east [Jerusalem](#).

## Freedom of Religion

After the war, Israel abolished all the discriminatory laws promulgated by [Jordan](#) and adopted its own tough standard for safeguarding access to religious shrines. "Whoever does anything that is likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the various religions to the places sacred to them," Israeli law stipulates, is "liable to imprisonment for a term of five years." Israel also entrusted administration of the holy places to their respective religious authorities. Thus, for example, the Muslim Waqf has responsibility for the mosques on the [Temple Mount](#).

Since 1967, hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Christians — many from Arab countries that remain in a state of war with Israel — have come to [Jerusalem](#) to see their holy places. Arab leaders

are free to visit [Jerusalem](#) to pray if they wish to, just as Egyptian President [Anwar Sadat](#) did at the [Al-Aksa](#) mosque.

According to [Islam](#), the prophet [Muhammad](#) was miraculously transported from Mecca to [Jerusalem](#), and it was from there that he made his ascent to heaven. The [Dome of the Rock](#) and the [Al-Aksa](#) Mosque, both built in the seventh century, made definitive the identification of [Jerusalem](#) as the "Remote Place" that is mentioned in the [Koran](#), and thus a holy place after Mecca and Medina. Muslim rights on the Temple Mount, the site of the two mosques, have not been infringed. Although it is the holiest site in Judaism, Israel has left the [Temple Mount](#) under the control of Muslim religious authorities.

For Christians, [Jerusalem](#) is the place where [Jesus](#) lived, preached, died, and was resurrected. While it is the heavenly rather than the earthly [Jerusalem](#) that is emphasized by the Church, places mentioned in the [New Testament](#) as the sites of his ministry and passion have drawn pilgrims and devoted worshipers for centuries. Among these sites is the [Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#), the Garden of Gethsemane, the site of the Last Supper, and the [Via Dolorosa](#) with the fourteen stations of the Cross.

The rights of the various Christian churches to custody of the Christian holy places in [Jerusalem](#) were defined in the course of the nineteenth century, when [Jerusalem](#) was part of the [Ottoman Empire](#). Known as the "status quo arrangement for the Christian holy places in [Jerusalem](#)," these rights remained in force during the period of the British Mandate and are still upheld today in Israel.

Along with religious freedom, Palestinian Arabs in [Jerusalem](#) have unprecedented political rights. Arab residents were given the choice of whether to become Israeli citizens. Most chose to retain their Jordanian citizenship. Moreover, regardless of whether they are citizens, [Jerusalem](#) Arabs are







Source: From Palestine and Syria. *Handbook for Travellers* by Karl Baedeker, 5th Edition, 1912. [Maps of the Middle East](#)

By the time of partition, a thriving Jewish community was living in the eastern part of [Jerusalem](#), an area that included the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. This area of the city also contains many sites of importance to the Jewish religion, including the city of David, the Temple Mount and the [Western Wall](#). In addition, major institutions like Hebrew University and the original Hadassah hospital are on Mount Scopus—in eastern [Jerusalem](#).

The only time that the eastern part of [Jerusalem](#) was exclusively Arab was between 1949-1967, and that was because [Jordan](#) occupied the area and forcibly expelled all the Jews.

## The Final Status of Jerusalem

The Israeli-Palestinian [Declaration of Principles \(DoP\)](#) signed September 13, 1993, leaves open the status of [Jerusalem](#). Article V says only that [Jerusalem](#) is one of the issues to be discussed in the permanent status negotiations. The agreed minutes also mention [Jerusalem](#), stipulating that the Palestinian Council's jurisdiction does not extend to the city. Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) said that [Jerusalem](#) will "not be included in any sphere of the prerogatives of whatever body will conduct Palestinian affairs in the territories. [Jerusalem](#) will remain under Israeli sovereignty."

### [Map of Jerusalem](#)

The agreement also says that the final status will be based on UN Security Council Resolutions [242](#) and [338](#), neither of which mentions [Jerusalem](#). In fact, the U.S. Ambassador who helped draft [Resolution 242](#), [Arthur Goldberg](#), said it "in no way refers to [Jerusalem](#), and this omission was deliberate....Jerusalem was a discrete matter, not linked to the [West Bank](#)."

Other than this agreement to discuss [Jerusalem](#) during the final negotiating period, Israel conceded nothing else regarding the status of the city during the interim period. Israel retains the right to build anywhere it chooses in [Jerusalem](#) and continues to exercise sovereignty over the undivided city. Nothing in the agreements that Israel and the [The Palestinian Authority \(PA\)](#) have made so far changes those conditions.

The two sides agreed on interim autonomy for the Palestinians, the creation of a [The Palestinian Authority](#), the election of a Palestinian Council, and the redeployment of Israeli military forces in the West Bank and Gaza. [Jerusalem](#), however, was specifically excluded from all these arrangements. It was also decided that during the interim period, the Palestinian Council would have no jurisdiction over issues to be determined in the final status negotiations, including [Jerusalem](#). It was explicitly agreed that the authority of the Palestinian Authority would extend only over those parts of the West Bank and Gaza that were transferred to its authority, to the exclusion of those areas to be discussed in the permanent status negotiations, including [Jerusalem](#) and Israeli [settlements](#).



The [PLO](#) maintains that [Jerusalem](#) should be the capital of an independent state. "Anyone who relinquishes a single inch of Jerusalem is neither an Arab nor a Muslim," [Yasser Arafat](#) said just before the agreement with Israel was signed (Voice of Palestine, Algiers, September 2, 1993). And the day of the signing, Arafat declared that the Palestinian flag "will fly over the walls of [Jerusalem](#), the churches of [Jerusalem](#) and the mosques of [Jerusalem](#)" (Jordanian television, September 13, 1993).

In response to talk of altering [Jerusalem's](#) status, former [Mayor Teddy Kollek](#), whose reputation for tolerance and efforts to promote coexistence in the city was respected by all sides, wrote: "The Palestinians' demand for the establishment of two capitals or two municipalities cannot be accepted within the framework of united [Jerusalem](#)."

Jerusalem is one issue on which the views of Israelis are unanimous: The city must remain the undivided capital of Israel. Still, efforts have been made to find some compromise that could satisfy Palestinian interests. For example, while the [Labor Party](#) was in power under [Yitzhak Rabin](#) and [Shimon Peres](#), [Yossi Beilin](#) apparently reached a [tentative agreement](#) that would allow the Palestinians to claim the city as their capital without Israel sacrificing sovereignty over its capital. Beilin's idea was to allow the Palestinians to set up their capital in a West Bank suburb of Jerusalem-Abu Dis. This idea was discussed but never accepted by the government of Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#).

Under Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#), discussions of a compromise were renewed, and Barak offered [dramatic concessions](#) giving Palestinians greater control over larger areas of East Jerusalem and more authority over the [Temple Mount](#). These ideas were discussed at the [Camp David Summit](#) in July 2000, but rejected by [Yasir Arafat](#). Violence subsequently broke out and, after the destruction of [Joseph's Tomb](#) and a number of other Jewish religious shrines by Palestinian rioters, the prospects for compromise on Jerusalem dimmed. [Ariel Sharon](#) subsequently [defeated](#) Barak in the election for Prime Minister on a platform specifically repudiating the concessions Barak offered on Jerusalem.

After several years of resisting talk of any compromise on Jerusalem, Deputy Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#), the former [mayor](#) of Jerusalem, raised the possibility in 2004 of allowing certain predominantly Arab sections of the city to become part of a future Palestinian state. That view remains controversial and has not been formally embraced by Prime Minister [Sharon](#).

## The U.S. Position

Only two countries have embassies in [Jerusalem](#) — [Costa Rica](#) and [El Salvador](#). Of the 184 nations with which America has diplomatic relations, Israel is the only one where the United States does not recognize the capital or have its embassy located in that city. The U.S. embassy, like most others, is in [Tel Aviv](#), 40 miles from [Jerusalem](#). The United States maintains a consulate in east [Jerusalem](#) that deals with Palestinians in the territories and works independently of the embassy, reporting directly to Washington. Today, then, we have the anomaly that American diplomats refuse to meet with Israelis in their capital because [Jerusalem's](#) status is negotiable, but make their contacts with Palestinians in the city.

In 1990, Congress passed a [resolution](#) declaring that "[Jerusalem](#) is and should remain the capital of the State of Israel" and "must remain an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and

religious group are protected." During the 1992 Presidential campaign, Bill Clinton said: "I recognize [Jerusalem](#) as an undivided city, the eternal capital of Israel, and I believe in the principle of moving our embassy to [Jerusalem](#)." He has not reiterated this view as President; consequently, official U.S. policy remains that the status of [Jerusalem](#) is a matter for negotiations.

In an effort to change this policy, Congress overwhelmingly passed [The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995](#). This landmark bill declared that, as a statement of official U.S. policy, [Jerusalem](#) should be recognized as the undivided, eternal capital of Israel and required that the U.S. embassy in Israel be established in [Jerusalem](#) no later than May 1999. The legislations also included a waiver that allowed the President to essentially ignore the legislation if he deemed doing so to be in the best interest of the United States. President Clinton [exercised that option](#).

While critics of Congressional efforts to force the administration to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital share the President's view that such a move would harm the peace process, supporters of the legislation argue the opposite is true. By making clear the United States position that [Jerusalem](#) should remain unified under Israeli sovereignty, they say, unrealistic Palestinian expectations regarding the city can be moderated and thereby enhance the prospects for a final agreement.

During the 2000 presidential campaign [George W. Bush](#) promised that as President he would immediately "begin the process of moving the United States ambassador to the city Israel has chosen as its capital" (Speech to AIPAC Policy Conference, (May 22, 2000). As President, however, he has continued his predecessors' policy of issuing [waivers](#) to avoid implementation of the relocation act.

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## Jerusalem in the Bible

The settlement of [Jerusalem](#) began in a very early period, and testimonies to this appear in three different sources. There are references to this early settlement in the Bible (*Genesis 14* -- The story of [Abraham](#) and the Canaanite Kings), in [archaeological](#) findings, and in independent historical sources found in other lands that had maintained political and commercial ties with the Land of Israel (especially Egypt). In that early Canaanite period, [Jerusalem](#) was one of many independent city-states that existed in the region.

[Jerusalem](#) began to be considered a city of significant regional importance only after it was conquered by the Israelite King David a few centuries later. While, during the assignment of the Promised Land to the twelve Israelite tribes, [Jerusalem](#) became part of the area of the tribe of Benjamin, it was never actually conquered by the Israelites (see *Judges 19*). Only when King David conquered it, did [Jerusalem](#) begin to develop as an important political center -- and moreover -- a significant religious center.

[The Bible](#) is the main source of the historical information which we have today about [Jerusalem](#) in the period of the 10th to 6th century BCE. Other written sources add to that body of information and shed some light on the historical processes that developed in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Because of [Jerusalem's](#) unique status, it became a major attraction to archaeologists and other researchers from the 19th century until the present time. The first major [archaeological discoveries](#) were made at the end of the 19th century.

[Archaeological](#) excavations and research in [Jerusalem](#) have their own special problems. This is a site with a long history and an abundance of relics. However, this is also a city in which settlement and growth has never ceased and continues even today. Researchers were presented with a need to both find a way to excavate its historical past, while living in its vibrant present.

It is peculiar that for the Biblical period in particular we have few [archaeological](#) findings. The builders and architects of later periods, who constructed large extravagant buildings with deep foundations, caused a lot of damage to the ancient remnants. This is most evident in the area of the Temple Mount, where, in the 1st Century BCE, King Herod's builders truly outdid themselves. In other parts of the city, however, some well preserved remnants of Biblical [Jerusalem](#) were uncovered. This was the case in the excavations in the Jewish Quarter, led by Prof. Nachman Avigad, and at [Jerusalem's](#) Eastern hill, south of Temple Mount, where for a number of years excavations were being led by Prof. Yigal Shilo. The excavations of the southern wall led by Prof. Mazar also proved fruitful. The [archaeological](#) findings shed light on the writings of the Bible, that are sometimes unclear. At times the findings explain the text, and at times actual physical examples of objects described in writing in the Bible have been unearthed.

Our knowledge of [Jerusalem](#) in Biblical times is enriched yearly, and provides us with important tools for interpreting the Bible and other written histories.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Jerusalem in Arab/Muslim History

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## Jerusalem Quotes

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“Never before have Arabs made a capital in a kind of holy city. Take Saudi Arabia. They have Mecca, Medina, to build their capital there. They took a village called Riyadh and turned it into a capital. The Jordanians had Jerusalem, but they built a capital in Amman and not Jerusalem. I think the Arabs have — the Muslims have great rights in Jerusalem and they must be safeguarded to the tiniest little bit, as the rights of other Christians.

We were there a little earlier. In another four or five years, we celebrate 3,000 years since David the King came and made his capital of the Jewish Kingdom in Jerusalem. When we came back to a unified city after the Six-Day War, we were attacked, we drove them away, the city became one. We didn't touch any of the holy places. We gave freedom of access and freedom of prayer, of course, and freedom of education to every one of the many groups in the city.” — [Teddy Kollek](#) is the former mayor of Jerusalem.

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“For three thousand years, Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish hope and longing. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, culture, religion and consciousness of a people as has Jerusalem in the life of Jewry and Judaism. Throughout centuries of exile, Jerusalem remained alive in the hearts of Jews everywhere as the focal point of Jewish history, the symbol of ancient glory, spiritual fulfillment and modern renewal. This heart and soul of the Jewish people engenders the thought that if you want one simple word to symbolize all of Jewish history, that word would be ‘Jerusalem.’” — Teddy Kollek, *Jerusalem*, (DC: Washington Institute

For Near East Policy, 1990), pp. 19-20.

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“You ought to let the Jews have Jerusalem; it was they who made it famous.” — Winston Churchill to diplomat Evelyn Shuckburgh, 1955, *Descent to Suez; Diaries 1951-1956* (London: 1986).

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“Through a historical catastrophe — the destruction of Jerusalem by the emperor of Rome — I was born in one of the cities in the diaspora. But I always deemed myself a child of Jerusalem, one who is in reality a native of Jerusalem.” — [S.J. Agnon](#), upon receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1966

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“Without Jerusalem, the land of Israel is as a body without a soul.” — Elhanan Leib Lewinsky (1857-1910), Hebrew writer and Zionist leader

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“No city in the world, not even Athens or Rome, ever played as great a role in the life of a nation for so long a time, as Jerusalem has done in the life of the Jewish people.” — [David Ben-Gurion](#), 1947

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“We regard it as our duty to declare that Jewish Jerusalem is an organic and inseparable part of the State of Israel, as it is an inseparable part of the history of Israel, of the faith of Israel.” — [David Ben-Gurion](#), Knesset speech, December 1949

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“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” — [Psalms 122:6](#)

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“In the din and tumult of the age, the still small voice of Jerusalem remains our only music.” — [Israel Zangwill](#), 1921

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“Eternity means Jerusalem.” — Talmud-Berakhot

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“For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” — [Isaiah 2:3](#)

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### Prime Minister Ben-Gurion On Jerusalem

(December 13, 1949)

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*On the adoption of [Resolution 303 \(IV\)](#), the Knesset met in Tel Aviv to hear the Prime Minister. [David Ben-Gurion](#) proposed, and the [Knesset](#) concurred, that the Knesset move its seat to Jerusalem and that all Government offices, save for the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as well. On 27 December, the Knesset held its first session in [Jerusalem](#), Government offices began to move shortly afterwards. The Foreign Ministry moved in 1953. Following is the address of the Prime Minister:*

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One week ago today, in the name of the Government of Israel, I made a statement on Jerusalem before the Knesset. I need hardly say to you that this statement retains its full force, and that no change in our attitude has occurred or can possibly occur.

As you know, the General Assembly of the United Nations has, in the meantime, by a large majority, decided to place Jerusalem under an international regime as a separate entity. This decision is utterly incapable of implementation - if only because of the determination and unalterable opposition of the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves. It is to be hoped that the General Assembly will in the course of time amend the error which its majority has made, and will make no attempt to impose a regime on the Holy City against the will of its people.

We respect and shall continue to respect the wishes of all those States which are concerned for freedom of worship and free access to the Holy Places, and which seek to safeguard existing rights in the Holy Places and religious edifices in Jerusalem. Our undertaking to preserve these rights



remains in force, and we shall gladly and willingly carry it out, even though we cannot lend our participation to the forced separation of Jerusalem, which violates without need or reason the historic and natural right of the people who dwell in Zion.

From the establishment of the Provisional Government we made the peace, the security and the economic consolidation of Jerusalem our principal care. In the stress of war, when Jerusalem was under siege, we were compelled to establish the seat of Government in Ha'Kiryat at Tel Aviv. But for the State of Israel there has always been and always will be one capital only - Jerusalem the Eternal. Thus it was 3,000 years ago - and thus it will be, we believe, until the end of time.

As soon as the fighting stopped, we began transferring Government offices to Jerusalem and creating the conditions the capital needed - effective communications, economic and technical arrangements. We are continuing with the transfer of the Government to Jerusalem and hope to complete it as soon as possible.

When the first Knesset was opened in Jerusalem on 14 February 1949, there were no adequate facilities for its normal functioning in the capital, and it was necessary to transfer its sessions temporarily to Tel Aviv. The required arrangements in Jerusalem are on the verge of completion, and there is nothing now to prevent the Knesset from returning to Jerusalem. We propose that you take a decision to this effect.

In all these arrangements there is, of course, nothing that alters in the slightest degree any of the existing rights in the Holy Places, which the Government of Israel will respect in full, or our consent to effective supervision of these Holy Places by the United Nations, as our delegation to the General Assembly declared.

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Source: [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/bgjer.html)

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## The Jerusalem Syndrome

**By Leah Abramowitz**

The [Western \("Wailing"\) Wall](#) is one of Israel's biggest tourist attractions. At all hours of the day or night, visitors stream to the Wall to pray, to take photographs, to participate in a demonstration or an army swearing-in ceremony, to attend a Bar Mitzva or just to absorb some of the historic and spiritual atmosphere that permeates the ancient site.

Late at night, when the indirect lighting dramatizes every crevice, every seam in the huge stones, when the night sounds meld in the open plaza, a special kind of person is drawn to this spot - those seeking a supernatural experience. Psychologists identify them as having the "Jerusalem Syndrome," and they too add colour and interest to the nocturnal scene at the Temple Mount.

They include the would-be messiahs, the misfits, the misguided, the spiritually involved, all flowering in the small hours. Those with the Jerusalem Syndrome are literally intoxicated by the Holy City. They revel in the special atmosphere of the Wall past midnight. They delight in the mystical aura they perceive there at night. Their psyches are inflamed by the historical holiness in which they feel enveloped at this lonely hour. Even though there are other places in Jerusalem which attract these characters, the Wall remains the favourite, especially among Jews. The Jerusalem Syndrome was first clinically identified by Dr. Yair Bar El, formerly director of the Kfar Shaul Psychiatric Hospital and now district psychiatrist for the Ministry of Health. Bar El studied 470 tourists who were referred to Kfar Shaul for treatment between 1979 and 1993 and on the basis of his work with these visitors, who had been declared

temporarily insane, reached some fascinating conclusions.

Kfar Shaul is the obvious place to carry out this study, as it is the duty psychiatric hospital for tourists who display mental health disturbances. Of the 470 visitors from all over the world who were hospitalized, 66 percent were Jews, 33 percent were Christians and one percent had no known religious affiliation. Bar El is quick to point out that it is not only tourists who demonstrate behaviour that indicates the Jerusalem Syndrome; in fact local residents can be temporarily or permanently affected as well.

The peak time for visitors who are "intoxicated" by the Holy City is, not surprisingly, during the holiday seasons, like Christmas, the Jewish High Holy days, Easter and Passover, or during the summer months of July and August. Bar El divides the patients into two broad categories; those with previous psychiatric histories (either diagnosed or undiagnosed) and those with no previous psychiatric history.

The pilgrim-tourists studied demonstrated remarkably similar patterns of disintegration. The symptoms generally appeared on the second day of their stay in [Jerusalem](#), when they began to feel an inexplicable nervousness and anxiety. If they came with a group or family they suddenly felt a need to be on their own and left the others.

They would often begin to perform acts of purification, or cleansing, taking showers, or immersing in a mikva (ritual bath). Often the patients changed their clothes, the preferred dress being white robes, in an effort to resemble biblical figures, because most of them chose to identify themselves with a character from the New or Old Testament: women always chose to emulate a woman from the Bible while men chose a male figure. This type of behaviour does not, of course, inevitably lead to hospitalization in a psychiatric ward. Indeed most of those affected by the Jerusalem Syndrome do not cause any disturbance and are at worst a nuisance or a mild source of amusement. But a certain percentage of the people are severely disturbed and will often behave in a way that demands psychiatric intervention, at least temporarily. One Danish teacher, who had come to the Holy City five times in the last five years, felt it was the only place in the world where he could communicate with Jesus directly. However, when he started to talk at the top of his lungs to the Virgin Mary who he saw sitting on the roof of the Mosque of Omar, he required hospitalization. The fight which developed with the guards on the Temple Mount ended in his being brought to Kfar Shaul.

Sometimes, according to Dr. Bar El, the Jerusalem Syndrome victim will have definite religious goals, like the man from California who came to seek a red heifer for purification purposes, as directed in Numbers, 19. Others have political inclinations, which, in one example, led to the burning of the El Aksa Mosque in 1969 by Dennis Rohan, a deranged young Australian Christian tourist. David Koresh, who spent time in Jerusalem, may have been affected by the Syndrome, but its effect was protracted, since only after he returned to the U.S. did he proclaim himself the messiah and found his sect at Waco, Texas.

Some patients adopt magical health views or individual religious requirements, self-written prayers and idiosyncratic customs. However, an interesting sub-group which the psychiatrist identified consisted of 42 people out of the 470 studied, who had no previous psychiatric problems whatsoever. "Something just happened to me," is a common response when such tourists begin psychotherapy.

After four or five days, the patient treated at Kfar Shaul responds to the here and now approach favoured by the psychiatrists. "I feel like a clown," say some in embarrassment and cannot explain how they came to jump into a pond in the city park or sing hymns in the middle of the night from the top of the Old City ramparts. "They don't like to talk about the experience afterwards," says Bar El. When he tried to circulate a questionnaire to his former patients abroad, for a follow-up to his study, he got few responses and those that replied gave vague answers. "They simply don't understand themselves what happened to them," says the doctor.

Of the 42 who had no previous psychiatric history, 40 were Protestants, whose families were strict and devout Bible-reading, mid-American Christians. They had internalized the Good Book and had an idealized view of Jerusalem. Bar El believes that the shock of facing the earthly Jerusalem caused a psychiatric reaction which helped bridge the reality with the dream city. He consulted a number of religious authorities, including Catholic leaders, to sound out opinions as to why Protestants rather than Catholics fall prey to the Jerusalem Syndrome.

"I found three probable main reasons," says Bar El. "Protestants direct their prayers to an unfathomable Being, whereas the Catholics have the intervention of a priest, a tangible middle man." The second reason was that Jesus is the paramount religious figure in the Protestant creed, whereas the Catholics also have the Virgin Mary and many saints with

whom to identify. Finally, Protestants, unlike Catholics, and followers of the Eastern religions and Islam, have little religious ecstasy incorporated in their rituals and few opportunities for spiritual fervour - which seems to be a necessary component of religious experience. In Judaism also, the psychiatrist feels, there are more opportunities for fervid religious experiences in the myriad rituals, deeds and customs incorporated in the Jewish tradition.

Dr. Bar El notes that the Jerusalem Syndrome is similar to the "Florence Syndrome," identified by Italian psychiatrists, who long ago noticed a tendency among tourists and visitors to that city to act in a bizarre and irrational fashion. In Florence, however, the phenomenon seems to be triggered by art works and the beauty of the city itself, rather than religion.

Another [Jerusalem](#) psychiatrist, Dr. Jordan Scher, claims that many disturbed people flock to the Holy City seeking the special spiritual atmosphere that imbues the capital, especially the Old City. "Jerusalem is flooded by messiahs; those who come to meet him, to wait for him or to settle the turmoil in their own souls. "

Many Jewish young people turn to yeshivas to enhance their religious drive. Dr. Scher observes that some who are accepted are expelled later when it is discovered that they are disturbed, while others are turned down to begin with. Many of them find their way to the Wall, which becomes a sanctuary. There each one evolves his own way of expressing this inexplicable intoxication with holiness.

For example, there is Motele, dressed all in white, grey beard matted and curling, yelling at a group of tourists, "Welcome America!" Motele has an enormous, bellowing voice: when he sings a prayer for rain, head flung back and hands outstretched towards the heavens, it sounds like a full symphony orchestra. Sometimes, for effect, he stands on top of the rabbinical office roof, roaring out a prayer. The uninitiated think it's a voice from heaven and some have been known to do instant teshuva (penitence), at least for the next half hour.

There is Gershon, traipsing down the steps in a hippy uniform, reminiscent of the Woodstock era, complete with coloured, Bukharan skullcap; blue eyes dancing and white beard prancing, looking for all the world like a Jewish Santa Claus. A lean, black-clad Bratslaver hassid paces back and forth outside the gates in the dark, reciting psalms to



himself, twirling his meagre brown beard and concentrating on getting into the right mood. Yehia, the Yemenite, arrives. He favours the dress of his forefathers: a turban and long, flowing, but dirty galabiya and sandals, winter and summer. Yehia used to camp out in the German Hospice ruins, right above the Wall, but the police chased him out. Yehia is a blessing; he distributes blessings like others distribute candy, to those who want and to those who don't. In a pronounced Yemenite accent he bestows the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob on the bowed head of the beneficed, murmuring quickly and without pause, until he sees someone else in need of his consecration. At the top of the steps, Amnon stands at attention. Day and night, winter and summer, he roams the Old City, dressed in a grey suit, tie and hat. He stands for hours, doing nothing, just being within sight of the Temple Mount. Is he waiting for the Messiah? Is he doing penitence? Nobody knows, nobody ever speaks to Amnon. He is just there, a silent sentinel on a silent mission of his own.

Miriam is a squat, scarf-clad woman, who appears at the Wall at irregular hours, sometimes with a baby carriage in tow, sometimes with a tot or two as well. She has been known to swab the flagstones, kindly asking women worshippers to step aside as she goes about the impossible job of washing down the huge plaza with a kitchen mop. Unsuspecting visitors think she's official, and feel sorry for the cleaning lady who has to work so hard at midnight.

These colourful characters at the Wall are not governed by canon or scripture. But they are drawn, as generations before them, to the spiritual centre of the universe, the hub of the three monotheistic religions. Some of these people, with problems, with extreme views and with otherworldly devotions may find themselves falling prey to this unique and still mainly incomprehensible phenomenon, the Jerusalem Syndrome.

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Source: *Ariel: The Israel Review of Arts and Letters* - 1996/102, [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Jerusalem's Population

(1844-2000)

Year	Jews	Muslims	Christians	Total
1844	7,120	5,000	3,390	15,510
1876	12,000	7,560	5,470	25,030
1896	28,112	8,560	8,748	45,420
1922	33,971	13,411	4,699	52,081
1931	51,222	19,894	19,335	90,451
1948	100,000	40,000	25,000	165,000
1967	195,700	54,963	12,646	263,309
1987	340,000	121,000	14,000	475,000
1990	378,200	131,800	14,400	524,400
2000	530,400	204,100	14,700	758,300

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Sources: John Oesterreicher and Anne Sinai, eds., Jerusalem, (NY: John Day, 1974), p. 1; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; Jerusalem Foundation; Municipality of Jerusalem. The figures for 2000 include 9,000 with no religion classified.

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## Mayors of Jerusalem (1899-2003)

1899 - 1907	<a href="#">Yussef Diya'udin Din Al-Khalidi (Pasha)</a>
1907 - 1909	<a href="#">Faidi Al-Alami</a>
1909 - 1917	Selim Effendi Al-Husseini
Dec 9, 1917 - Dec 27, 1917	Bill Borton (British military governor)
Dec 28, 1917 - 1 July 1, 1920	Sir Ronald Storrs (British military governor)
1917 - 1918	<a href="#">Aref Al-Dajani</a>
Mar 1918 - Apr 1920	<a href="#">Musa Qassem Al-Husseini</a>
1920 - 1934	<a href="#">Ragheb Nashashibi</a>
1934 - 1937	Hussein Fakhri Al-Khalidi
Oct 1, 1938 - Aug 1944	Mustafa Al-Khalidi
1944-1945	Daniel Auster (1st time) *
1945 - May 13, 1948	<b>Municipal Committee **</b>
<b>East Jerusalem</b>	

1948 - 1949	military governor
1948 - 1950	Anwar Al-Khatib
1950 - Sep 1951	<a href="#">Aref Al-Aref</a>
Oct 1951 - Mar 1952	Hanna Atallah
Mar 1952 - 1955	Omar Wa'ari
1955 - Jan 1957	<b>Municipal Committee***</b>
Jan 1957 - Jun 1967	Ruhi Al-Khatib
1967 - 1999	Amin Al-Majaj
1999 - May 31, 2001	Faisal Abdul Qader Al-Husseini (de facto)
<b>West (from 1967 Greater) Jerusalem</b>	
Aug 1948 - Jan 1949	Dov Joseph (military governor)
Jan 1949 - 1950	Daniel Auster (2nd time)
1950 - 1952	Shlomo Zalman Shragai (Mizrachi)
1952 - 1955	Yitzhak Kariv (Mizrachi)
1955 - Nov 1, 1959	<a href="#">Gershon Agron</a> ( <a href="#">Mapai</a> )
Nov 1959 - 1965	Mordecai Ish-Shalom
Nov 1965 - Nov 1993	<a href="#">Teddy Kollek</a> ( <a href="#">Rafi/ Labor</a> in 1968)
Nov 1993-2003	<a href="#">Ehud Olmert</a> ( <a href="#">Likud</a> )
2003-	<a href="#">Uri Lupoliansky</a> ( <a href="#">Agudat Yisrael</a> )

\* Daniel Auster was appointed mayor by the British High Commissioner after the death of Mustafa Al-Khalidi in 1944 . The Jewish Agency demanded a Jewish mayor, but the Muslims wanted a Muslim mayor, as had been the practice since 1877. From 1945 until the end of the mandate a mayor and two deputy mayors were appointed by the British. Auster was Deputy Mayor until the death of Al-Khalidi. See: Bovis, Eugene H. The Jerusalem Question. Hoover Policy Study No. 1. 1971. p. 33.

\*\* From 1945 until the end of the mandate a mayor and two deputy mayors were appointed by the British. See: Bovis, Eugene H. The Jerusalem Question. Hoover Policy Study No. 1. 1971. p. 33.

\*\*\*The municipal law was ammended in 1955, appointing two additional members to the council and reappointing Aref Al-Aref as mayor for a few months. ([PASSIA](#))

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#### Sources:

1. [World Statesman](#).
2. Bovis, Eugene H. The Jerusalem Question. Hoover Institution Studies 29 (Policy 1), 1971.
3. Gutman, Matthew. "New Jerusalem mayor stirs anxiety among the city's secular population." [JTA](#). (February 18, 2003).
4. [PASSIA](#).
5. [The Jerusalem Municipality](#).

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## Places and Sites in Jerusalem

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- [The Basilica of the Agony at the Garden of Gethsemane](#)
- [The Chapel of Dominus Flevit](#)
- [The Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#)
  - [Muslims to Lose Sole Control of Holy Sepulcher Keys](#)
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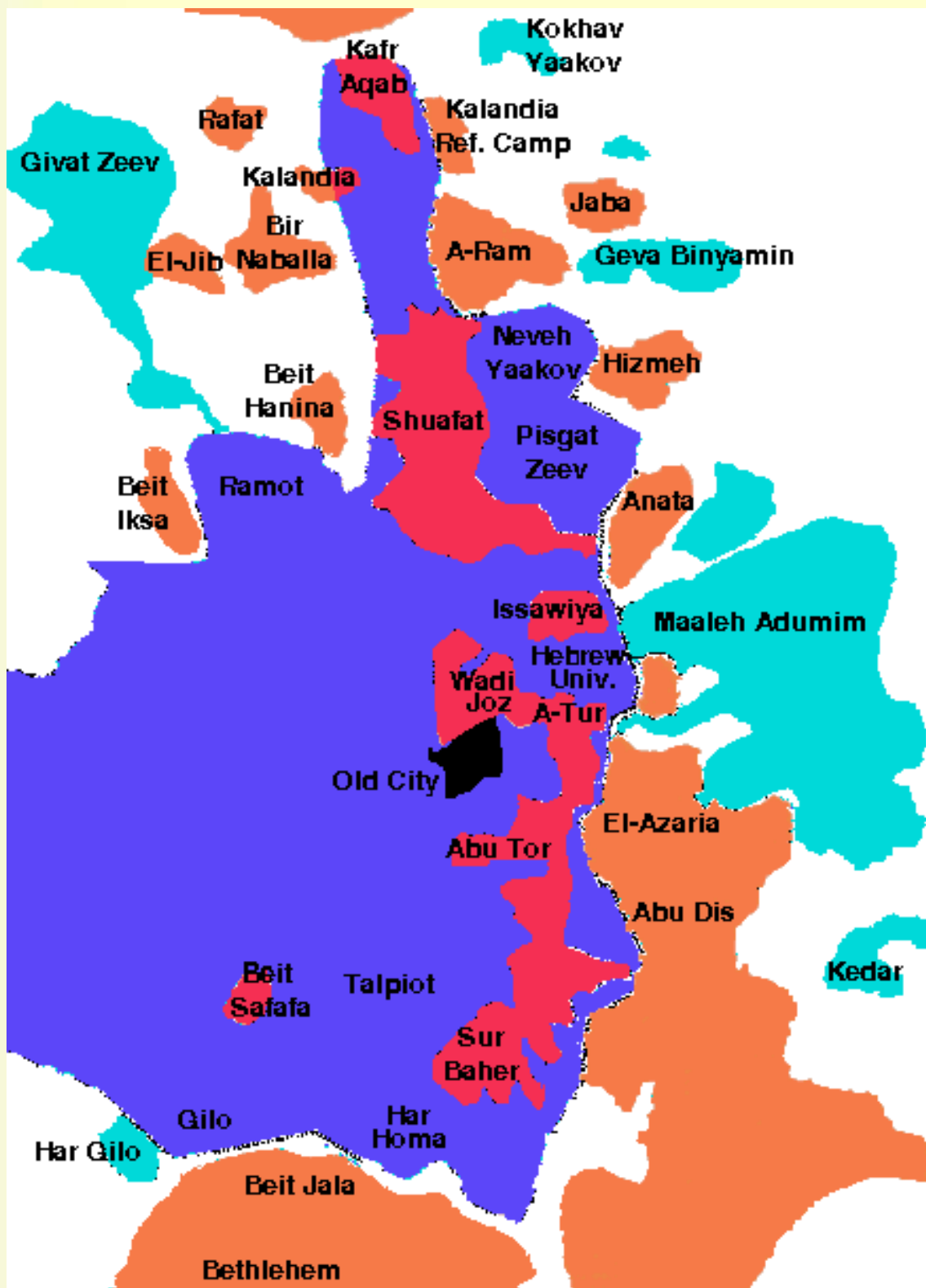
# The Proposed Division of Jerusalem

(July 2000)

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The map below is based on one which appeared in the Israel daily newspaper *Maariv* on July 27, 2000, just after the conclusion of the [Camp David](#) talks on the Israeli-Palestinian final status agreement.





According to the accompanying article by reporter Ben Caspit, Israeli negotiators under Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#) for the first time proposed to divide [Jerusalem](#) into two cities: a Jewish city to be known as Jerusalem which would serve as Israel's capital, as it does now; and an Arab city to be known as Al-Quds, the Arabic name for Jerusalem, which would serve as the capital of a new Palestinian Arab state.



## LEGEND



Jerusalem: Present municipal boundaries

	Jewish areas to be annexed to Jerusalem
	Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem to be ceded to Al-Quds
	Arab areas outside Jerusalem to be designated Al-Quds
	Jerusalem's Old City: to be divided between Jerusalem and Al-Quds

The Israeli proposal included the following main points:

1. Jewish areas outside Jerusalem's municipal boundaries would be annexed to the city, including such population centers as Givat Ze'ev, Ma'aleh Adumim and Gush Etzion. (Gush Etzion is a major settlement block just south of Jerusalem, and is not shown on the map).
2. Arab areas outside Jerusalem's municipal boundaries would become the heart of the new Arab city of Al-Quds, including regions such as Abu Dis, el-Azaria, Beit Jala, Anata and A-Ram.
3. Arab neighborhoods inside Jerusalem's present boundaries would either be annexed to Al-Quds or would be granted extensive self-rule. Though some of these areas would remain formally under Israeli sovereignty, in practice Israel would have little authority over them.
4. Jerusalem's ancient, walled Old City would be divided, with the Muslim and Christian quarters offered autonomy under formal Israeli sovereignty, while the Jewish and Armenian quarters remained fully under Israeli rule. The Palestinian state would gain religious autonomy over the Temple Mount, though Israel proposed that an area be set aside for Jewish prayer on the site.

The Palestinians rejected the proposal, sticking to their demand for full sovereignty over all of Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods. An American compromise proposal granting them sovereignty over the Old City neighborhoods but autonomy over the city's other Arab neighborhoods, or vice versa, was also rejected, though the Israeli side had indicated its readiness to consider this as well.

Since the Camp David meeting, negotiations have continued on and off with new ideas about Jerusalem being floated by the United States, Israel and the Palestinians.

Source: [IRIS](#)

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### Protection of Holy Places Law, 1967\*

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1. The Holy Places shall be protected from desecration and any other violation and from anything likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places.
  - a. Whosoever desecrates or otherwise violates a Holy Place shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of seven years.
  - b. Whosoever does anything likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five years.
3. This Law shall add to, and not derogate from, any other law.
4. The Minister of Religious Affairs is charged with the implementation of this Law, and he may, after consultation with, or upon the proposal of, representatives of the religions concerned



and with the consent of the Minister of Justice make regulations as to any matter relating to such implementation.

5. This Law shall come into force on the date of its adoption by the Knesset.

*LEVI ESHKOL*  
Prime Minister

*ZERACH WARHAFTIG* Minister of  
Religious Affairs

*SHNEUR ZALMAN SHAZAR*  
President

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\* Adopted by the Knesset on 27 June 1967.

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### Synagogues of the World Jerusalem



The Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai synagogue is on Mishmeret Kehuna Street in the Old City. It served as the center of the [Sephardic](#) community and, to this day, the Chief Sephardic Rabbi, the Rishon LeZion, ceremoniously assumes his office here. The Ben-Zakai is named after the Second Temple sage Rabban [Yochanan Ben Zakai](#), as legend deems this spot as the location of his Beit Midrash, study hall.



The Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue is named for a surprise visit of the Prophet [Elijah](#). Many years ago the Jewish community in the area had so dwindled that there were no longer 10 men for the completion of a [minyan](#). On [Yom Kippur](#) a 10th man mysteriously showed up and completed the quorum. After the fast the visitor entered an adjoining room to complete his prayers and vanished. The community realized that the 10th man was none other than Elijah the Prophet and the synagogue was named after him. The ark was donated by the community of [Livorno, Italy](#) after their main synagogue was destroyed during WWII. The entrance to the building is from Beit El street tucked into a little nook beneath the home of Rabbi and Mrs. Getz zt"l, the former Rabbi of the Kotel. There is a minyan here every [Shabbat](#) and on holidays.



The Middle Synagogue was created in the 18th century as a result of the growth of the [Sephardic](#) community which outgrew the premises of the Ben Zakai .It only became known as the Middle Synagogue, its original name was Kahal Zion, when the Istanbuli synagogue was built and sandwiched it between the Ben Zakai. This building is no longer used for services, although it was renovated in 1967. It houses an ark from Piedmont, [Italy](#).



The Istanbul Synagogue was built by immigrants from [Istanbul](#) in the 18th century. It houses a 17th century ark from a community in [Italy](#). The bimah was brought over from a synagogue in Pesaro, Italy. The entrance is also through Beit-El street at the juncture with Gal-Ed street. Services are held once a month on the Shabbat of Rosh Chodesh, the new month.



The Menachem Tzion Synagogue was built in the middle ages. This congregation was one of the first to be reestablished in the community after [1967](#) when there were still gaping holes from the wars in the front of the entrance. The beautiful eighteenth-century ark was brought from [Italy](#) and the furnishing in the men's section came from the synagogue of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch in [Germany](#). It is located on HaYehudim St. just north of the Hurva, up the staircase to the right of the Menorah coffee shop.



**The Beit-El Yeshiva and Synagogue is a centuries-old [kabbalist](#) yeshiva. Also known as Kahal Chassidim, it was renewed under the aegis of HaRav Yehuda Mayer Getz z"l, who until his death was the official Rabbi of the [Western Wall](#) area. It was originally founded in 1757 during the time that the Hurva had been confiscated from the Jews. The entrance is through the magnificent silver etched door at the beginning of Beit El Street.**



The Ramban synagogue was founded ( reconstructed) by [Rav Moshe ben Nachman](#), the Ramban, upon his arrival to [Jerusalem](#) in 1267. The building foundation is comprised of Romanesque vaults resting on [Roman](#) and [Byzantine](#) capitals which, together with the fact that there are no Gothic or Muslim features, suggest that the original building predates the [Crusader](#) period. Over the years, the building has been used as a house of prayer, a mosque (when confiscated by a Mufti), a flour mill, and the neighboring minaret served as a police station during the [British period](#). In 1967, the Jews finally regained their right to the property and the synagogue was reopened, exactly 700 years after the Ramban revived the ancient building. It is located at the corner of HaYehudim Street and the main square.



Off the Hurva Square on the east side, past the entrance to the Herodain Quarter, next to Yeshivat HaKotel stands the remains of what was the tallest building in the Jewish Quarter before [destroyed by the Jordanians in 1948](#). The Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue was built by Nissan Bak at the request of Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhin. The dome was donated by Emporer Franz-Josef of Austria. There are pictures displayed in the bottom level of the remains alongside the remains of mikves, however, to keep mischevious children from the neighborhood out, the Jewish Quarter Development Company erected fences around the building.





**The Hurva Synagogue, also known as Hurvat Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid, was the center of the Old Yishuv. It was destroyed by the Jordanian legion shortly before the fall of the [Jewish Quarter](#) in [1948](#). It's remains can be visited under the great arch, which was built after [1967](#) to commemorate the synagogue, in the main square of the neighborhood. Entrance from the stairs above the Ramban Synagogue or from HaYehudim St.**



**The Belz Synagogue is a Chasidic shul that seats 6,000 in its main sanctuary.**

**To learn about the history of Jerusalem, click [here](#).**

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Sources: [Jewish Quarter Jerusalem](#)

Belz Synagogue photo courtesy of [Jewish Buffalo](#)

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## The Vatican and Jerusalem

### (January 1973)

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*Pope Paul VI had visited Holy Places in Israel and the West Bank in January 1964 and had been received by the President of Israel at Megiddo, and seen off in Jerusalem. After the Six-Day War, the Vatican had mentioned its interest in the internationalisation of Jerusalem, but went on negotiating with Israel concerning the Christian Holy Places. In October 1969, Foreign Minister Eban was granted an audience by the Pope. In January 1973, the Prime Minister had an audience. Following are the official statements issued after Mrs. Meir's visit, as well as excerpts from a statement by Foreign Minister Eban, made in the Knesset on January 24, 1973, and dealing with Israel-Vatican relations:*

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#### **I. Official communiqué, translated from the Italian, as published in *L'Osservatore Romano*.**

This morning, 15 January 1973, at 12:15 hours, His Holiness Pope Paul VI received in audience Her Excellency Mrs. Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel, who was accompanied by the Ambassador of Israel in Italy, His Excellency Mr. Amiel E. Najjar.

The conversation, which lasted about an hour, had as its themes the situation in the Middle East and the particular problems that concern the Holy Land.

I His Holiness, after recounting the history and the sufferings of the Jewish people, expounded the point of view of the Holy See on the questions that have a major connection with its humanitarian mission,



such as the problem of the refugees and the situation of the various communities that live in the Holy Land; and on those of its own more specifically religious mission insofar as concerns the Holy Places and the sacred and universal character of the City of Jerusalem.

The Prime Minister emphasised Israel's wish for peace, and fully illustrated Israel's position on the possibilities of arriving at a peaceful solution of the Middle Eastern conflict through negotiation between the parties and on the questions mentioned above; and, furthermore, alluded to the phenomenon of terrorism as well as particular situations regarding the Jewish communities in certain parts of the world.

His Holiness, finally, in expressing his fervent wish that it shall be justice and right that establish peace and co-existence among all the peoples of the Middle East, once more manifested the intention of the Holy See to do everything within its possibilities to achieve that end.

## **II. Excerpts from a Government statement in the Knesset on the political situation, made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 24 January 1973.**

In October 1969, the Vatican issued an official communiqué on the occasion of the meeting between the Pope and myself. It used these words: "The Holy Father listened attentively to all that the Minister told him concerning Israel's efforts to achieve the peace that he so yearns for, and with regard to the situation of the Jews remaining in Arab lands, as well as other problems of a humanitarian nature."

The spirit of these words encouraged us to pursue our contacts, and a letter in which the Vatican affirmed to us the Pope's wish to meet the Prime Minister prompted us to take the opportunity of raising the dialogue to the highest possible level.

... The resulting discussion, frank and sincere, took place in an atmosphere of goodwill and mutual respect. The Pope expressed his esteem for the person of the Prime Minister as well as for the Jewish people, which he regards as so "devoted to its roots and its tradition." He re-affirmed his profound gratitude for Israel's faithful care of the Holy Places.

He declared his appreciation of the Prime Minister's announcement of our willingness that the Christian Holy Places be administered by Christians and the Moslem Holy Places by Moslems. He reacted with satisfaction to Israel's readiness, as made known by the Prime Minister, to permit a college to be set up in Jerusalem to give expectancy and prestige to its Christian community. He renewed his hope of seeing "a recognised status for the Holy Places" and his view that Jerusalem possessed a special universal character, that its beauty must be preserved. At the same time, it was emphasised that his words in this context carry no hint of "internationalisation". The Pope, finally, said that he was prepared to foster and encourage the dialogue.

All this, after he had heard the Prime Minister's comprehensive clarification of Israel's stand and the historical and spiritual factors determining its policy.

... There were reservations in certain sections of the Press, and not only abroad; but they are fated to be consigned to limbo. The fact of the meeting itself, in an ambience of dignity and mutual respect, will be engraved for ever in the memory of Israel and Jewry and in the thought of all nations.

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Source: [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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# The Dawn of "History" (Sumer, Egypt)

**ca. 3000 B.C.E.**

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Chalcolithic Period, first settlement: ca. 3500

Early Dynastic period (Akkad): ca. 2800

Old Kingdom period (Egypt): ca. 2700-2400

Ebla flourishes: ca. 2500-2200

Priestess Enheduanna, first known author in the world: ca. 2300-2200

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## Context of Ancient Israelite Religion

(ca. 2000-587 B.C.E.)

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**Middle Kingdom period (Egypt): 2100-1780**

**Old Babylonian period: ca. 2000-1750**

**Israel's Patriarchal period: ca. 2000-1700**

First houses built in Jerusalem: ca. 2500

[Abraham](#) & [Sarah](#), [Isaac](#) & Ishmael, famine forces Israelites to migrate to [Egypt](#): ca. 1850/1750/1700

Origin of traditions of the "Abrahamic covenant"

Traditions of [Jacob/Israel](#) and the 12 Patriarchs

First [Jerusalem](#) city wall built: ca. 1800

[Jacob](#) and his family join [Joseph](#) in Egypt: ca. 1700

Old [Assyrian period](#): ca. 1900-1400

Hammurabi: ca. 1792-1750

Hittite empire: ca. 1750-1200

Hyksos in [Egypt](#): ca. 1700-1550

Kassite period (Babylonia): ca. 1600-1150

New Kingdom period ([Egypt](#)): ca. 1570-1085

Ugaritic texts: ca. 1500-1200

Middle Assyrian period: ca. 1400-900

Amarna period (Egypt): ca. 1400-1300

[Mosaic](#) period (Israel); ca. 1300-1200

After setting up the Ark at Shiloh near Shechem ([Nablus](#)), Joshua launches foray into [Jerusalem](#) ([Joshua 10:23](#), [15:63](#)): 1272

Exodus from Egypt, Sinai Torah, Canaan Entry: ca. 1250-1200

Sea Peoples invade [Egypt](#) and Syro-Palestine: ca. 1200

Period of the [Judges](#) (Israel): ca. 1200-1050/1000

Jerusalem is a [Canaanite](#) city: ca. 1200-1000

Middle Babylonian period: ca. 1150-900

[Hebrew prophets \(Samuel-Malachi\)](#): ca. 1050-450

[Monarchical period](#) in Israel: ca. 1000-587

Saul (transitional king): ca. 1030-1010

[David](#) conquers the Jebusites and makes [Jerusalem](#) his capital: ca. 1010-970

[Solomon](#) builds the [First Temple](#) on [Mount Moriah](#): ca. 970-931



[Secession](#) of Northern Kingdom (Israel) from Southern Kingdom (Judah):  
ca. 931

Rehoboam rules Judah: 931-913

Jeroboam I rules Israel, chooses Shechem as his first capital, later moves it  
to Tirzah: 931-910

Abijah rules Judah: 913-911

Asa rules Judah: 911-870

Nadab (son of Jeroboam) rules Israel: 910-909

Baasha kills Nadab and rules Israel: 909-886

## **Neo-Assyrian period: 900-612**

Elah, son of Baasha, rules Israel: 886-885

Zimri kills Elah, but reigns just seven days before committing suicide,  
Omri chosen as King of Israel: 885

War between Omri and Tibni: 885-880(?)

Omri kills Tibni, rules Israel: 885-874

Omri moves capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria: 879

Ahab, Omri's son, is killed in battle, Jezebel reigns as Queen. Athaliah,  
Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, marries Jehoram, crown prince of Judah:  
874-853

Jehoshapha rules Judah: 870-848

Ahaziah, son of Ahab, rules Israel, dies in accident: 853-851

Israelite [Prophets](#) Amos, Hosea, [Isaiah](#): 750-725

Northern Kingdom (Israel) destroyed by [Assyrians](#); [10 tribes](#) exiled (10

lost tribes): 722/721

Ahaz, King of Judah dismantles Solomon's bronze vessels and places a private Syrian altar in the Temple: 720

[Hezekiah](#), King of Jerusalem, with help of God and the prophet [Isaiah](#) resists Assyrian attempt to capture [Jerusalem](#) ([2 Chronicles 32](#)). Wells and springs leading to the city are stopped: 716

Assyrian ruler Sennacherib besieges Jerusalem: 701.

Neo-Babylonian (“[Chaldean](#)”) period: 612-538

Josiah (Judean King) and “Deuteronomic Reforms”: 620

Judean [Prophets](#) Jeremiah and Ezekiel: ca. 600-580

Southern Kingdom (Judah) and [First Temple](#) destroyed-Babylonian exile: 587/586

Judean Prophet “Second Isaiah”: ca. 550

First Jews return from Babylon in small numbers to rebuild the city and its walls. Seventy years of exile terminated. ([Daniel 9](#), [Haggai 2:18-19](#)): 541

Persian ruler [Cyrus the Great](#) conquers Babylonian Empire: 539

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# Judaism after the Babylonian Exile

(ca. 538 B.C.E.-70 CE)

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[Persian Period](#): 538-333

Edict of Cyrus (first return from Exile): 538

[Jerusalem](#) ("Second") [Temple](#) rebuilt: 520-515

Judean [Prophet](#) Haggai: 520

Reformation led by [Ezra](#) and Nehemiah: 450-400

[Torah](#) (Pentateuch = first division of Jewish Scriptures) begins to gain recognition as Scripture: ca. 450

Bagoas, a Persian, is made governor of [Jerusalem](#): 411

[Hellenistic](#) (Greek) period: 333-63

[Alexander the Great](#) conquers the Land of Israel: 333/331

Judaism under [Greek](#) Ptolemies & Seleucids: ca. 320-168

"Septuagint" translation of [Torah](#) into Greek: ca. 250

Coming of [Rome](#) to the east Mediterranean: ca. 230-146

[Prophets](#) (second division of Jewish Scriptures) recognized by some as Scripture by ca. 201

Jewish [Qumran](#) community: ca. 200 B.C.E.-135 CE

Selucid, king of Syria, plunders [Jerusalem](#), murdering many. 175

Jewish [Maccabean](#) revolt against restrictions on practice of [Judaism](#) and desecration of the [Temple](#): 166-160 B.C.E.

[Maccabees](#) capture the [Temple](#) from Seleucids and rededicate it.

Jewish autonomy under [Hasmoneans](#): 142-129 B.C.E.

[Rome](#) (Pompey) annexes Palestine: 63 B.C.E.

First Jewish [Revolt](#) against [Rome](#): 66-73

Vespasian gives [Yochanan ben Zakkai](#) permission to establish a Jewish center for study at Yavneh that will become the hub for rabbinic Judaism: 69

Destruction of [Jerusalem](#) and the second [Temple](#): 70

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## Rule of Rome

(ca. 146 B.C.E.-400 C.E.)

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Coming of [Rome](#) to the east Mediterranean: ca. 230-146

Jewish autonomy under [Hasmoneans](#): 142-129 B.C.E.

[Rome](#) (Pompey) annexes Palestine: 63 B.C.E.

[Herod the Great](#) (Jewish Roman ruler of Palestine): 37-4 B.C.E.

[Herod](#) captures [Jerusalem](#), has Antigonus II executed, and marries the [Hasmonean](#) princess Mariamne I : 37 B.C.E.

[Herod](#) creates [Temple Mount](#) and begins to rebuild the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#). Project continues until 72 C.E.: 20 B.C.E.

[Hillel & Shammai](#) (Jewish sages): turn of the era

[Rome](#) establishes direct rule of prefects in Judea: 6 CE

Philo Judaeus of Alexandria: ca. 13 B.C.E.-after 41 CE

Joshua/[Jesus](#) "the Christ": before 4 B.C.E.-ca. 30 CE

[Jesus](#) is crucified: ca. 30

Gamliel/Gamaliel I (Jewish leader-scholar): fl. ca. 40 CE

First Jewish [Revolt](#) against [Rome](#): 66-73

Vespasian gives [Yochanan ben Zakkai](#) permission to establish a Jewish center for study at Yavneh that will become the hub for rabbinic Judaism: 69

Destruction of [Jerusalem](#) and the second [Temple](#): 70

([Yohanan ben Zakkai](#)), with rabbinic ordination: ca. 73

Last stand of Jews at [Masada](#): 73

Gamaliel II excludes sectarians (including Christians) from the [synagogues](#): ca. 90-100

Writings (third and last division of Jewish Scriptures) discussed and accepted as sacred scripture: ca. 90-150

Jewish Revolts against [Rome](#) in Cyprus, Egypt and Cyrene. The Great Synagogue and the Great Library in Alexandria are destroyed as well as the entire Jewish community of Cyprus. Afterwards, Jews were forbidden on Cyprus: 114-117

Rabbi [Akiva](#) active in consolidating Rabbinic Judaism: 120-135

[Bar Kokhba](#) rebellion ([Second Jewish Revolt](#)). Roman forces kill an estimated half a million Jews and destroy 985 villages and 50 fortresses: 132-135

Hadrian renames [Jerusalem](#) Aelia Capatolina and builds a Pagan temple over the site of the [Second Temple](#). He also forbids Jews to dwell there: 136

Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's successor, repeals many of the previously instituted harsh policies towards Jews: 138-161

Roman emperor Lucius Septimus Severus treats Jews relatively well, allowing them to participate in public offices and be exempt from

formalities contrary to [Judaism](#). However, he did not allow the Jews to convert anyone: 193-211

[Mishnah](#) (Jewish oral law) compiled/edited under [Judah the Prince](#): ca. 200

[Judah the Prince](#) moves the seat of learning from Beth Shearim to Tzipori: 203

Roman Emperor Caracalla allows free Jews within the empire to become full Roman citizens: 212

Age of Amriam: Academies established and served as the focal point of Jewish life: 220-470

Emperor Alexander Severus allowed for a revival of Jewish rights, including permission to visit Jerusalem: 222-235

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# Early Christian Period of Development (30-311 C.E.)

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Paul "the apostle" (Jewish "Christian"): fl. 36-64 CE

[Josephus](#) (Jewish leader, historian): ca. 37-100 CE

[Christian Testament](#) (NT) writings: ca. 50-125 CE

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## Rabbinic Jewish Period of Talmud Development

(70-400/600 C.E.)

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First Jewish [Revolt](#) against [Rome](#): 66-73

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## Byzantine Rule

(313-636)

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Sporadic persecution of Christianity by [Rome](#): to 311

Origen (Christian scholar, biblical interpreter): fl. 200-254

Because of his health, [Judah HaNasi](#) relocates the center of Jewish learning from Beth Shearim to [Sepphoris](#): 203

Emperor Caracalla enfranchises all Jews within [Roman empire](#), allowing them to become full citizens: 212

Babylonian Jewish Academy founded at Sura by Rab: ca. 220

Roman emperor Alexander Severus's respect for Jews and lenient treatment towards them enables Judah II to successfully press for greater Jewish rights, including the right to visit [Jerusalem](#): 222-235

Amoraim, or [Mishna](#) scholars, flourish. The Amoraim's commentary, along with the Mishna, comprises the [Talmud](#): 220-470

Rise of Mani/Manichaeism: 240-276

[Babylonian Jews](#) flourish (as does Manichaeism) under Persian King Shapur I: ca. 250

Early development of Christian monasticism in [Egypt](#): 250-330

Eusebius (Christian author, historian): 263-339

Violent persecution of Christians by Emperor Diocletian: 303

One of the first Christian councils, the Council of Elvira, forbids intermarriage and social interaction with Jews: 306

Emperor Constantine embraces Christianity, announces Edict of Toleration: 312/313

Code of Constantine limits rights of non-Christians, is Constantine's first anti-Jewish act: 315

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# Consolidation & Dominance of Classical Christianity

(325-590)

Christian First Ecumenical Council, at Nicea (Asia Minor), changes the date of Easter from [Passover](#) and forbids Jews from owning Christian slaves or converting pagans to Judiasm: 325

[Jerusalem](#) becomes part of Constantine's [Byzantine](#) Empire: 330

Jerome (Christian author, translator): ca. 325-420

Constantine forbids intermarriage with Jews and the circumcision of heathen or Christian slaves, declaring death as the punishment: 339

Augustine (Christian author in North Africa): 354-430

[Hillel](#) creates a new [calendar](#) based on the lunar year to replace the dispersed [Sanhedrin](#), which previously announced the festivals: 359

[Hillel](#) founds Beit Hillel, a school emphasizing tolerance and patience. [Hillel](#), a descendant of [King David](#), is one of the first scholars to devise rules to interpret the Torah: 370-425

Christianity becomes THE religion of [Roman Empire](#): 380/391

Commentary on the [Mishnah-Jewish Palestinian Talmud](#) edited: ca. 400

Jewish Babylonian [Talmud](#) edited: ca. 400-600

[Rome](#) sacked by Visigoths: 410

St. Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria, champions violence against the city's Jews and incites the Greeks to kill or expel them. Some Jews return within a few years, but many return only after the Muslims conquer Egypt: 415

Jewish office of Nasi/Prince abolished by [Rome](#): 425

Theodosius enacts a code prohibiting Jews from holding important positions involving money. He also reenacts a law forbidding the building of new synagogues: 439

Christian Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon: 451

After conquering [Italy](#) in 493, Ostrogoth king Theodoric issues an edict safeguarding the Jews and ensuring their right to determine civil disputes and freedom of worship: 500

An earthquake hits Israel, partially destroying [Acre](#) and incurring damage as far east as [Jerusalem](#): 501

Rebellion leader Mar Zutra usurps power from Kobad the Zenduk, establishing an independent Jewish state in Babylon that would last for seven years, until Zutra's forces defeated Zutra's army, killing him and instituted a harsh policy toward the remaining Jews: 511

Southern Arabian king Ohu Nuwas adopts [Judaism](#), possibly as a rampart against the spread of Christianity. King Eleboas of Abyssinia, with the help of Justin I, later defeated Nuwas: 516

After Ravenna residents burnt down local synagogues, Ostrogoth ruler Theodoric orders the Italian town to rebuild the synagogues at their own expense: 519

Recared of [Spain](#) adopts Catholicism, banning Jews from slave ownership, intermarriage and holding positions of authority. Recared also declares that children of mixed marriages be raised Christian: 587

Birth of Prophet [Muhammad](#), Makkah: 570.

Pope Gregory the Great formulates the official Papal policy towards Jews, objecting to forced baptism and tolerating them according to the previous council's regulations: 590.

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### "Medieval" Period in the West

(ca. 600-1500)

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Visigothic ruler Sesbut prohibits [Judaism](#) after several anti-Jewish edicts are ignored. Exhiled Jews return to Byzantine [Spain](#) under Sesbut's successor, Swintilla: 610

Persian General Romizanes captures [Jerusalem](#) and allows Jews to run the city. At this time, aproximately 150,000 Jews are living in 43 settlements in Eretz-Israel: 614

The Persians renege on their promises and forbid Jews to settle within a three mile radius of [Jerusalem](#): 617

Although Chintilla decrees that only Catholics are permitted to live in Visigoth [Spain](#), many Jews continue to live there: 638

Visigoth King Erwig continues oppression of Jews, making it illegal to practice any Jewish rites and pressing for the conversion or emigration of the remaining Jews: 682

First account of Jews in England: 691

Jews help [Muslim](#) invaders capture [Spain](#), ending Visigoth rule and beginning a 150 year period of relative peace, in which Jews were free to study and practice religion as they wished: 712

In the wake of a narrow military defeat over Muslim forces, Leo III of

Constantinople decided his nation's weakness lay in its heterogenous population, and began the forcible conversion of the Jews, as well as the "New Christians." Most converted under Leo III clandestinely continued their Jewish practices: 722

In the wake of the Norman conquest of England, Jews left Normandy and settled in London and later in York, Norwich, Oxford, Bristol and Lincoln: 1066

Pope Gregory VII prohibited Jews from holding offices in Christendom: 1078

The greatest Hebrew poet of his time, [Judah Halevi](#): 1086-1145

Iban Iashufin, King of the Almoravides, captured [Granada](#) and destroyed the Jewish community, the survivors fled to Toledo: 1090

Henry IV of [Germany](#), who granted Jews favorable conditions whenever possible, issued a charter to the Jews and a decree against forced baptism: 1095

Christian theologian, who called for the slavery of all Jews, Saint Thomas Aquinas: 1227-1274

King Henry III of England forced Jews to pay half the value of thier property in taxes: 1229

King Henry III of [England](#) ordered Jewish worship in synagogue to be held quietly so that Christians passing by do not have to hear it. e also ordered that Jews may not employ Christian nurses or maids, nor may any Jew prevent another from converting to Christianity: 1253

French King Louis IX expelled the Jews from [France](#), ending the Tosaphists period. Most Jews went to Germany and further east: 1254

Seeing himself as the "master of the Jews," King Henry II of England transferred his rights to the Jews to his brother, Richard, for 5,000 marks: 1255

In a special session, the [Vienna](#) city council forced Jews to wear the Pileum cornutum, a cone-shaped headress prevelent in many medieval

woodcuts illustrating Jews. This form of distinctive dress was an addition to badge Jews were forced to wear: 1267

King Edward of [England](#) banned usury and unsuccessfully encouraged Jews in agriculture, crafts and local trades. He also forced Jews over the age of seven to wear an indentifying badge: 1275

The Archbishop of Canterbury, John Pectin, ordered all London synagogues to closed and prohibited Jewish physicians from practicing on Christians: 1282

[Blood libel](#) in Munich, [Germany](#) results in the death of 68 Jews. An additional 180 Jews are burned alive at the synagogue: 1285

A mob in Oberwesel, [Germany](#) kills 40 Jewish men, women and children after a ritual murder accusation: 1287

Bowing political pressure, English King Edward I expells the Jews from [England](#). They were only allowed to take what they could carry and most went to France, paying for thier passage only to be robbed and cast overboard by the ship captains: 1290

Similar to accusations made during the Black Plague, Jews were accused of encouraging lepers to poison Christian wells in [France](#). An estimated five thousand Jews were killed before the king, Philip the Tall, admitted the Jews were innocent: 1321

Henry II of Castile forces Jews to wear yellow badges: 1321

Charles IV of [France](#) expels all French Jews without the one year period he had promised them: 1322

Much of Europe blames the Black Plague on the Jews and tortured to confess that they poisoned the wells. Despite the pleas of innocence of Pope Clement VI, the accusations resulted in the destruction of over 60 large and 150 small Jewish communities: 1348-1349

Basle burns 600 Jews at the stake and forcibly baptizes 140 children, expelling the city's other Jews. The city's Christian residents convert the synagogue into a church and destroy the Jewish cemetery: 1348



Pope Clement VI issues an edict repudiating the libel against Jews, saying that they too were suffering from the Plague: 1348

[Samuel ben Meir Abulafia](#) is arrested and tortured to death by King Pedro without any explanation. The king also confiscated his great wealth: 1360

[German](#) Emperor Wenceslaus arrests Jews living in the Swabian League, a group of free cities in S. Germany, and confiscates their books. Later, he expelled the Jews of Strassburg after a community debate: 1385-1386

Emperor Wenceslaus expels the Jews from Strassbourg and confiscate their property: 1386

After a priest was hit with some sand from a few small Jewish boys playing in the street, he insisted that the Jewish community was plotting against him and began a virulent campaign against the city's Jews, resulting in the massacre of thousands and the destruction of the city's synagogue and Jewish cemetery. King Wenceslaus refused to condemn the act, insisting that the responsibility lay with the Jews for going outside during the Holy Week: 1389

Pope Boniface continues the policy of Clement VI, forbidding the Christians to harm Jews, destroy their cemeteries or forcibly baptize them: 1389

Ferrand Martinez, archdeacon of Ecija, begins a campaign against Spanish Jewry, killing over 10,000 and destroying the Jewish quarter in Barcelona. The campaign quickly spreads throughout [Spain](#), except for [Granada](#), and destroys Jewish communities in Valencia and Palma De Majorca: 1391

King Pedro I orders [Spain](#) not to harm the remaining Jews and decrees that synagogues not be converted into churches. 1391

King Pedro I announces his compliance with the Bull of Pope Boniface IX, protecting Jews from baptism. He extends this edict to Spanish Jewish refugees: 1392

Benedict XIII bans the study of the Talmud in any form, institutes forced Christian sermons and tries to restrict Jewish life completely: 1415

Pope Martin V favorably reinstates old privileges of the Jews and orders that no child under the age of 12 can be forcibly baptized without parental consent: 1420

All Jews are expelled from Lyons, including the refugees from Paris who were expelled 20 years earlier. Jews now only remain in Provence (until 1500) and in the possessions of the Holy See: 1420

Pope Martin V issues a bull reminding Christians that Christianity was derived from [Judaism](#) and warns the Friars not to incite against the Jews. The Bull was withdrawn the following year, alleging that the Jews of Rome attained the Bull by fraud: 1422

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# Reception & Classical Development of Muhammad's Islamic Message (570-1258)

[Muhammad](#) ("the Prophet" of Islam): ca. 570-632

Prophetic call and start of [Quranic](#) revelations: ca 610

[Persian](#) invasion, Jews allowed to controll Jerusalem: 614

Persions change policy toward Jews, forbid them from living within three miles of [Jerusalem](#): 617

The *hijra* (emigration) from Mecca to Medina: 622

[Muhammad](#) attacks Jewish Arabian tribes for refusing to convert to [Islam](#). Eventually the Southern Arabian tribes are destroyed: 624-7

While proselytizing Arabia, [Muhammad](#) captures the Banu Kurara tribe and forces the group of about 600 to chose between conversion and death. After spending all night praying, all but three or four Banu Kurarans are beheaded: 626

Emperor Heraclius breaks his promise of protection to Jews, massacring any he found and forbidding them from entering Jerusalem. Hundreds of Jews were killed and thousands exhiled to Egypt, ending the Jewish towns in the Galilee and Judea. Heraclius' decree remained in effect until the

Muslim conquest of Jerusalem: 627-629

Capitulation of Mecca, rededication of Kaba: 630

The Jewish tribe Kaibar defends itself against Muslim forces, negotiating a settlement in which half of their crops would go to Mohammed in exchange for peace. Other Jewish tribes, including Fadattr, Tedma and Magna reached similar deals: 632

Pope Gregory the Great: 590-604

Period of the Jewish Rabbinic Geonim: ca. 600-1300

[Muhammad](#) dies, creating the four "rightly guided caliphs" of Islam: 632-661

Muslim forces capture [Caesarea](#), forcing the city's estimated 100,000 Jews to follow the Pact of Omar, which meant they had to pray quietly, not build new synagogues and not prevent Jews from converting to [Islam](#). The Jews were also forbidden from riding horses and holding judicial or civil posts, and were forced to wear a yellow patch for identification: 637

Caliph Umar conquers [Jerusalem](#) and Jews are permitted to return to the city under Islam: 638

Assassination of Ali (last of the four): 661

[Umayyad Dynasty](#) of Islam in Damascus (Syria): 661-750

[Muslim](#) Attacks on Christian Constantinople: 669, 674

Massacre of Ali's son Husayn and Shiites (Iraq): 680

[Muslims](#) extend [Jerusalem](#) and rebuild walls and roads: 685

[Dome of the Rock](#) built on site of First and Second [Temples](#) by Caliph Abd el-Malik: 692

[Muslim](#) Forces Attack Spain Successfully: 711

[Al-Aqsa Mosque](#) built, [Jerusalem](#): 715.

[Islam](#) repulsed at Tours (France), gateway to Europe: 732

[Abbasid](#) caliphate founded: 750

[Karaism](#) founded (Jewish reaction to Rabbinic Judaism): ca. 760

Baghdad founded by [Abbasids](#): 762.

Anan Ben David, organizer of the Karaite sect that only believed in the literal Biblical writings and not the [Oral law](#): 767

Charlemagne, French Holy Roman Emperor, protected and helped develop Jewish culture in his kingdom, seeing Jews as an asset: 742-814

Jewish Kingdom of Khazar lasts over 500 years, defending itself from the [Muslims](#), [Byzantines](#) and Russians, finally subdued by Mongols under Genghis Khan: 740-1259

[Abbasid Dynasty](#) of Islam in Baghdad (Iraq)—the "golden age" of Islamic culture: 750-1258

Abu Hanifa (Muslim theologian and jurist in Iraq): ??-767

Malik ibn Anas (jurist, collector of hadiths, Medina): 710-795

The Medieval Jewish Kingdom of the Khazars 740-1259

Caliph Harun al-Rashid rules in "1001 Nights" style: ca. 800

Mutazilite rationalism developed and debated: ca. 800-950

[Harun Al Rashid](#), Caliph of the [Abbasids](#) forces Baghdad Jews to wear a yellow badge and Christians to wear a blue badge: 807

Caliph Mamun sponsors translations of Greek learning into Arabic (Arabic science flourishes): ca. 825

Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, who succeeded his father as king,

expanded his father's positive policies towards the Jews, like changing "market day" from Saturday (Shabbat) to Sunday: 814-840

Ibn Hanbal (jurist, collector of hadiths, Baghdad): 855

Palestine annexed to [Egypt](#): 868

Bukhari and Muslim (collectors of hadiths): 870 and 875

[Shiite](#) "twelvers" arise: 874

Al-Ashari (ex-Mutazilite Muslim scholar): ??-935

[Saadia Gaon](#) (Rabbinic Jewish sage): 882-942

Office of the Exilarch was abolished after seven centuries, primarily because of dissention with the [Muslims](#). David ben-Zaccai held the position: 942

Execution of Hallaj, radical Persian Muslim mystic/sufi: 922

"Golden Age" in [Spain](#) (Islamic [Umayyad](#) dynasty): ca. 950-1150

Founding of Cairo (and soon thereafter Azhar University) by the Islamic Shiite Fatimid dynasty in Egypt: 969

Caliph al-Aziz defeated the Turkish princes at Ramleh, marking the beginning of Fatimid rule over Eretz-Israel: 969

Al-Azhar University Founded, Cairo: 972.

Rabbi Gershon of Mainz, [Germany](#), publishes a ban on bigamy. This marks the beginning of Ashkenazi (Franco-German) halachic creativity.

Ibn al-Bawwab produces earliest still extant [Qur'an](#) copy on paper, Baghdad: 1001.

Diplomat and poet, as well as vizier to King Habus of [Granada](#) and author of a Biblical Hebrew dictionary, Samuel Ibn Nagrela: 990-1055



[Egyptian](#) Caliph Hakkim, who claimed to be divine, pressured all [non-Muslims](#) to convert and forced all Jews to wear a "golden calf" around their necks: 1008

Oldest existing text of full Hebrew Bible is written: 1009

Earthquake causes structural damage on [Temple Mount](#): 1016

Messianic poet and philosopher, [Solomon Ibn Gabirol](#): 1021-1069

[Samuel Hanagid](#) becomes vizier of [Granada](#). He is the first of the poets of the Golden Age of [Spain](#), and symbolic of both the political power and literary creativity of Jews in Spain at the time: 1027

Rebel Abul Kamal Tumin conquered [Fez](#) and [decimated the Jewish community](#), killing 6,000 Jews: 1032

Final split ("schism") between Latin (Roman) and Greek (Byzantine) Classical Christian Churches: 1053/54 William the Conqueror (Norman) takes England: 1066

Abraham Ibn Daud: *On Samuel Ha-Nagid, Vizier of Granada*: 1056

[Rashi](#) (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac; Jewish sage): 1040-1105

Ghazali (Persian Muslim scholar and mystic): 1058-1111

[Benjamin of Tudela](#), Jewish traveller and historian, who wrote a famous journal called *Sefer Hamassa'ot* (Book of Travels): 1065-1173

[Rashi](#), a French-Jewish thinker, completes his commentaries on most parts of the Bible: 1070

Poet and philosopher [Moses Ibn Ezra](#): 1070-1139

Seljuk occupation of [Jerusalem](#): 1071

[First Crusade](#) Begins rule in [Jerusalem](#): 1099.

Philip expels Jews from [France](#): 1181

[Salah al-Din](#) returns [Jerusalem](#) to [Muslim](#) rule: 1187.

Philip expands his kingdom and allows Jews to return, for a fee and under strict conditions: 1192

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## Crusades

### (Christian Warfare with Islam in Palestine)

### (1095-1258)

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Participants in the [First Crusade](#) massacre Jews in several Central European cities, beginning centuries of pogroms linked to the Crusades: 1096

More than 5,000 Jews were murdered in [Germany](#) in several different attacks: 1096

Count Emico of Leiningen, on his way to join a [Crusade](#), attacked the synagogue at Speyers and killed all the defenders: May 3, 1096

1,200 Jews commit suicide in Mayence to escape Count Emico, who tried to forcibly convert them: May 27, 1096

[Judah Halevi](#) (Jewish author): 1085-1140

[Crusaders](#) (European Christians) capture [Jerusalem](#) and massacre tens of

thousands of the city's Jews: 1099

[Germans](#), including German Jews, migrate to [Poland](#). It is seen as "the land of opportunity": 1100

Moroccan Almoravid ruler Yoseph Ibn Tashfin orders all [Moroccan Jews](#) to convert or leave: 1107

Tiberias falls to the [Crusaders](#): 1109

After reconquering Toledo, [Spain](#) from the Muslims, Alphonso I invited all Jews to return: 1115

Jews from Muslim countries begin to settle in [Byzantium](#): 1120

Records of a Jewish gate in Kiev attest to the presence of a Jewish community there: 1124

[Maimonides](#) (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon; Jewish scholar): 1135-1204

[Judah Halevi](#) completes his influential philosophy of [Judaism](#) known as *The Kuzari*. He is a friend of commentator [Abraham Ibn Ezra](#), who also left [Spain](#) for the life of a wandering Jewish scholar: 1139

150 Jews killed in Ham, [France](#): 1143

Jews in Norwich, [England](#), are accused of murdering a Christian child in what is believed to be the first ritual murder charge. The blood libel, as well as others in England that follow in the 12th century, incites anti-Jewish violence: 1144

Benjamin of Toledo, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Toledo*: 1160-1173

Benjamin of Toledo writes of 40,000 Jews living in Baghdad, complete with 28 synagogues and 10 Torah academies: 1163

[Saladin](#) (1138-1193) overthrows Fatimid dynasty in Egypt: 1171

[Saladin](#) recaptures [Jerusalem](#) from [Crusaders](#) grants Jews permission to re-enter: 1187

[Jews attacked, over 150 die after a six day standoff in York, England:](#)

March 16, 1190

Approximately 2,500 Jews live in [England](#), enjoying more rights than Jews on the continent: 1190

French King Phillip starts the Third Crusade, cancels debts to Jews, drives many Jews out of [France](#), confiscates their property: 1191

Scholar and Jewish leader [Moses Ben Nachman \(Nachmanides\)](#): 1194-1270

[Moses Maimonides](#) completes *The Guide to the Perplexed*, considered the most important work of medieval Jewish thought: 1195

A group of 300 rabbis from France and England settle in Palestine (Eretz Yisrael), beginning what might be interpreted as [Zionist aliyah](#): 1211

Pope Innocent III (Christian): 1198-1216

First [synagogue](#) built in [Vienna](#), a city where Jews enjoyed more freedom than in other areas of Austria: 1204

Fourth Lateran Council expands anti-Jewish decrees in Europe, forces Jews to wear the Yellow Patch, the "Badge of Shame: 1215

Deacon Robert of Reading, [England](#), was burned for converting to [Judaism](#), setting a precedent for the burning of "heretics." 1222

Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury and a prime mover of the Lateran Council, forbids Jews from building new synagogues, owning slaves or mixing with Christians: 1222

[The Zohar](#) (a Jewish kabalistic book): written ca. 13th century

Death of Genghis Khan (roving Mongol conqueror): 1227

[Inquisition](#) by Christians in [Spain](#): ca. 1230

The Jewish community of Marrakech, [Morocco](#), is reestablished, leading to massacres of Jews caused by Islamic political revolt and grassroots hatred: 1232

Pope Gregory IX orders the kings of [France](#), [England](#), [Spain](#) and [Portugal](#) to confiscate Hebrew books, Following this edict, the Talmud is condemned and burned in [France](#) and [Rome](#): 1239

Thomas Aquinas (Christian scholar): 1225-1274

[Spanish Kabbalist](#) Abraham Abulafia: 1240-1292

First accusation of desecration of the Host (the wafers used is Christian Mass) - the blood libel - in Berlitz, Germany: 1243

Rule by Tartars, Mongols, Ayybids, and [Mamelukes](#): 1244-1517

Pope Innocent IV issued a Bull refuting blood libels and sent it throughout Germany and France: 1247

[Mamluk](#) Islamic rule (new dynasty) in Egypt: 1254-1517

Fall of Islamic [Abbasid dynasty](#) to Hulagu (Mongol): 1258

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# Further Transitions and Rebuilding of Political Islam (1258-1500)

Mongols sack Baghdad: 1258.

The Edict of Pope Nicholas III requires compulsory attendance of Jews at conversion sermons: 1278.

[Moses de Leon](#) of [Spain](#) completes a commentary of the [Torah](#). The [Zohar](#) remains a central text of Jewish mysticism: 1286

Expulsion of Jews from [England](#): 1290/1291

Expulsion of Christian [Crusaders](#) from [Syria](#): 1291

Black Death reaches Europe: 1348

Gutenberg prints Europe's first book with movable type: 1445

[Ottomans](#) begin rule from Constantinople: 1453

End of Muslim states in [Spain](#): 1492

Columbus sets sail: 1492

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## Mamluk Rule

(1291-1516)

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Italian Renaissance: 1300-1517

Expulsions of Jews from [France](#): 1306-1394

John Wycliffe (Christian dissident leader): 1328-1384

Rise of the [Ottoman](#) Muslim dynasty in Turkey: 14th century

Casimir the Great takes power in [Poland](#) and brings with him a sympathetic attitude toward the Jews, who benefit as a result: 1333

Black Death reaches Europe: 1348

Timurlane/Tamurlane, Turkic ruler in central Asia: 1336-1405

Black Death reaches Europe and Jews are accused of poisoning Christian wells: 1348

King Pedro of Portugal arrests and tortures to death [Samuel Ben Meir Abulafia](#). No charges were ever given and the King confiscated Abulafia's lands and great wealth: 1360

Damascus sacked by Timurlane: 1400

Jewish physician, Y'en Ch'eng is given the surname "Chao" as an honor by the Emperor. This family, which probably originated in India and Babylon, became one of the leading Chinese Jewish families: 1424

Philosopher, financier and scholar, Don Isaac Abarbanel intercedes many times on behalf of his fellow Jews, including trying to stop Ferdinand from expelling them. This time he was foiled by Torquemada and he followed them into exile. His commentaries cover the major and minor Prophets. Consistent with his belief that the Messiah would come in his lifetime, he also wrote three messianic texts called Migdal Yeshu'ot (Tower of Salvation): 1437-1509

Gutenberg prints Europe's first book with movable type.

Following a fire in Posen where the original charter (written by Casimir the Great) granted the Jews "privileges," Casimir IV renews all their rights and makes his charter one of the most liberal in Europe. This charter lasted less than a decade before it was revoked: 1447

Astronomer and historian, Abraham Zacuto creates tables used by Columbus. After the expulsion of 1492, Zacuto went to Portugal where he developed the metal Astrolab used by Vasco Da Gama. In 1498 he was forced to flee or convert. He left and reached Tunis where he wrote a history of the Jews from creation until the sixteenth century: 1452-1515

Casimir IV of Poland renews the rights of Jews and makes his charter one of the most liberal in Europe. (It lasted 7 years): 1447

Fall of Constantinople (Istanbul) to [Ottoman](#) Muslims: 1453

Casimir IV of Poland revokes the Jewish charter, at the insistence of Bishop Zbigniew. The Bishop had correctly predicted Casimir's defeat by the Teutonic Knights backed by the Pope, and succeeded in convincing the King that it was due to the Jews: 1454

Gutenberg Bible printed (invention of printing press): 1456

Pope Nicholas V authorized the establishment of the [Inquisition](#) to investigate heresy among the Marranos: 1463

Isabella's severe anti-Jewish leanings influence Ferdinand and lead to the final expulsion of the Jews from Spain: 1479-15

First [prayer book](#) published in [Soncino](#), Italy: 1486

The [first](#) complete edition of the Hebrew Bible is printed in [Soncino](#), [Italy](#): 1488

Christian expulsion of Muslim Moors from [Spain](#): 1492

Columbus sets sail: 1492

Christian [expulsion of Jews from Spain](#), sending over 200,000 Jews fleeing: 137,000 Jews forced to leave Sicily: 1493

Polish King Jan Olbracht's orders Jews to leave to leave [Crakow](#) for Kazimierz after they are blamed for a large fire that destroyed part of the city: 1494

Manuel of Portugal expels Jews from [Portugal](#): 1496

[Kabbalist](#) and author of "Lecha Dodi" (Come My Beloved), [Solomon ben Moses Alkabetz](#): 1505-1584

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## Reformation and Post-Reformation Christian Period

**(1517-Present - Here to 1569)**

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38 Jews were burned at the stake in [Berlin](#): 1510.

Jews in [Venice](#) are relegated to a ghetto, the most extreme segregation to which Jews had been submitted. Over time, Jews in many lands are similarly segregated: 1516

Martin Luther: 1483-1546

Luther posts "95 theses" in Wittenburg, Germany: 1517

Cracow Rosh Yeshiva whose major work was an adaptation of [Caro's Shulchan Aruch](#) to European Jewry, [Moses Isserles](#): 1520-1579

Brilliant [Talmudist](#), mathematician and astronomer, popular with Emperor Randolph II. [Judah Loew Ben Bezalel, the Maharal](#) of [Prague](#) also created the Golem, a man from clay who protected the Jewish community: 1525-1609

First [Yiddish](#) book published in [Cracow](#), Poland: 1534

[Talmud](#) and [Kabbalah](#) scholar, [Isaac Ben Solomon Luria](#), given the name "The Ari" (The Lion): 1534-1572

Luther writes "[About the Jews and Their Lies](#)," considered the first

modern anti-Semitic tract: 1543

Protestant Christian Reformation: ca. 1500-1650

John Calvin: 1509-1564

Jewish ghettos instituted ([Venice](#), [Rome](#)): 1516, 1555

The [Prague Haggadah](#), which contains the oldest known printed [Yiddish](#) poem, is published: 1526

Ivan the Terrible becomes ruler of [Russia](#) and refuses to allow Jews to live in his kingdom: 1547

Pope Paul IV allows the first printing of the *Zohar*, a Jewish mystical text: 1559

[Shulhan Arukh](#) (code of Jewish law by [Joseph Caro](#)): published 1567/1571

[Isaac Luria](#) writes the [Kabbalist](#) in [Safed](#). Luria's ideas give rise to a new form of Jewish mysticism: 1569

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# Dominance of Ottoman Muslim Empire in Turkey (1500-1920)

Victory of (Muslim Ottoman Turk) Selim I over [Egypt](#): 1517

[Ottoman](#) Muslim rulers (later) claim the title "caliph"

[Sulayman I](#), "the Magnificent," rules: 1520-1566

Dominance of Safavid [Shiite](#) Muslim dynasty in [Iran](#): ca. 1500-1800

Dominance of Mughal Muslim dynasty in India: ca. 1500-1800

[Rabbi](#), preacher and biblical commentator known for his brilliant sermons calling for self improvement, Ephraim Solomon of Lunshits: 1550-1619

Dr. Josphe Hacoheh was chased out of Genoa for practicing medicine, and soon after, all the Jews were expelled: 1550

Under the direction of Cardinal Caraffa, later Pope Paul IV, the [Talmud](#) was confiscated and publicaly burned in Rome on [Rosh Hashanah](#), starting a wave of [Talmud](#) burning throughout Italy: 1553

Cornelio da Montalcino, a Franciscan Friar who converted to [Judaism](#), is burned alive in [Rome](#): 1554

In his Bull Cum Nimis Absurdum, Pope Paul IV renewed all anti-Jewish legislation and installed a ghetto in [Rome](#). The Bull also forced Jews to wear a special cap, forbade them from owning real estate or practicing medicine on Christians. It also limited Jewish communities to only one [synagogue](#): 1555

Talmudic commentator, author of *Chidushei Halachot*, Samuel Eliezer Aidel, also known as "Maharsha." 1555-1631

In Recanti, [Italy](#), under the protection of Pope Paul IV, Joseph Paul More, a baptized Jew, entered a [synagogue](#) on [Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement](#), and tried to preach a conversion sermon. The congregation evicted him and a near massacre occurred. Soon after, the Jews were expelled from Recanti: 1558

First known Jew to step on American soil, [Joachim Gaunse](#) (Ganz), lands on Roanoke Island: 1585

Rene Descartes (scholar-philosopher): 1596-1650

In Brest Litovsk, the son of a wealthy Jewish tax collector, is accused of killing the family's Christian servant for ritual purposes. He is tortured and killed: 1564

Three months into his reign, Pope Pius V rejects Pope Pius IV leniency towards Jews and reinstates the restrictions of Pope Paul IV which forced Jews to wear a special cap, forbade them from owning real estate or practicing medicine on Christians. It also limited Jewish communities to only one synagogue: 1566

Brest Litovsk welcomes Jewish settlement. In 80 years the Jewish population surges from 4,000 to more than 50,000: 1569

Pope Sixtus V rejects Pope Gregory XIII policies and forbids Jews from living in the Papal states and to print the [Talmud](#): 1586

The leading Jewish composer of the late Italian Renaissance and the musical director of court of Mantua, [Salamone de Rossi](#): 1587-1643

[England](#) defeats the Spanish Armada, weakening [Spain](#) and decreasing the



reach of the [Inquisition](#), especially in the Netherlands:1588

Built of wood, the entire Jewish quarter of Posen burned while then gentile population watched and pillaged. 15 people died and 80 [Torah](#) scrolls were burned: 1590

[Rabbi](#), encyclopedist, physician and pupil of Galileo, Jose Solomon Delmedigo wrote over 30 works in math, geometry, chemistry, mechanics, philosophy and medicine: 1591

Esther Chiera, who held considerable influence in Sultan Murad III's court, was executed because of jealousy and the Sultan's desire for her assets: 1592

Pope Clement VIII expelled Jews from all Papal states except [Rome](#) and Ancona: 1593

Official [Yom Kippur](#) services are held for the first time in [Amsterdam](#), though not without controversy: 1596

Frei Diogo Da Assumpacao, a partly Jewish friar who embraced Judaism, was burned alive in Lisbon. His arguments against Christianity were published and gained wide popularity: 1603

A Jesuit missionary in China meets with Al T'Ien, a Chinese Jewish teacher. Thier correspondence is the basis for most known information regarding the Kaifeng Jewish community: 1605

Menasseh ben Israel (Jewish scholar-mystic): 1605-1657

The Hamburg Senate decides to officially allow Jews to live in the city on the condition there is no public worship: 1612

Vincent Fettmilch, who called himself the "new Haman of the Jews," led a raid on a Frankfurt synagogue that turned into an attack which destroyed the whole community:1614

King Louis XIII of France decreed that all Jews must leave the country within one month on pain of death: 1615

The Guild, led by Dr. Chemnitz, "non-violently" forced the Jews from

Worms: 1615

The Bishop of Speyer, with the backing of Frederick's troops, readmitted the Jews to Worms: 1616

[Holland's](#) Prince Maurice of Orange allowed each city to decide for itself whether to admit Jews. In the towns where Jews were admitted, they would not be required to wear a badge of any sort identifying them as Jews: 1616

Jesuits arrives in Grodno, [Poland](#) and accused the Jews of blood orgies and [host desecrations](#): 1616

Thirty Years War between Catholics and Protestants centers around Germany, Austria, France and the Netherlands: 1618-1638

Shah Abbasi of the Persian Sufi Dynasty increased persecution against the Jews forcing many to outwardly practice [Islam](#). (Many secretly practiced Judaism.) 1619

Christian Puritans begin emigrations to America: 1620

Sir Henry Finch, legal advisor to King James I, makes the first English call to restore the Jews to their homeland in his treatise *The World's Great Restoration or Calling of the Jews*: 1621

Well-known commentator of the [Shulchan Aruch](#) and author of several other works, Shabbetai Ben Meir Hacohen: 1621-1663

[Persian Jews](#) are forced to convert to [Islam](#): 1622-1629

Blaise Pascal (scholar): 1623-1662

The Jews of [Vienna](#) were forced to move into a ghetto called Leopoldstadt: 1625

Pope Urban VIII forbids Roman Jews to erect gravestones: 1625

[Shabbatai Zvi](#) (Jewish [“messianic”](#) leader): 1626-1676

Financier and founder of the Viennese Jewish community, Samuel Oppenheimer: 1630-1703

Miguel and Isabel Rodreguese and five others were burned alive in front of the King and Queen of Spain after being discovered holding Jewish rites: 1632

[Baruch/Benedict Spinoza](#) (scholar, converted Jew): 1632-1677

[Rhode Island](#) grants religious liberty to Jews: 1636

More than 80 New Christians (Jews who converted to Christianity) were burned at the stake after the [Inquisition](#) caught them holding regular Jewish services in Lima, [Peru](#): 1639

Shabbtai Ben Joseph the Bass, Author of *Seftai Yesharim*, the first bibliography of Hebrew books and biblical commentator. He also built a printing house in 1689, despite being jailed several times, accused of printing anti-Christian material. The printing house lasted more than 150 years: 1641-1718

The first Jewish colony in the New World is established in Recife, [Brazil](#): 1642

Chao Ying-Cheng helped rebuild the [synagogue](#) in Kai Fen after the Yellow River flooded the area. He also served in the government and helped build schools and squashed marauding bandits: 1642

Bogdan Chmelnitzki massacres 100,000 Jews in [Poland](#): 1648

The Treaty of Westphalia brings victory to the Protestants: 1648

In the largest *Auto de Fe* ever held in the New World, 109 crypto-Jews were accused of Judaizing, several were burned alive: 1649

John Casimir, upon ascending the Polish throne, negotiates a truce with Cosack leader and murderer of thousands of Jews, Bogdan Chmelnitzki: 1649

Arrival of 23 Jews from Brazil in New Amsterdam (New York, America): 1654

Dutch West India Company allows Jewish settlers to reside permanently in New Amsterdam, 1655

Jews readmitted to [England](#) by Oliver Cromwell: 1655

The first Jews gain the rights of [citizens in America](#): 1657

Jews expelled from [Vienna](#): 1670

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### Jewish Modern and Contemporary Periods

(ca. 1700-Present - Here to 1921)

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[Israel Baal Shem Tov](#) (founder of Jewish Hasidism): 1700-1760

[Jewish population](#) in America numbers approximately 250: 1700

Jonathan Edwards (American Christian preacher): 1703-1758

John and Charles Wesley (Christian): 1703-1791 and 1707-1788

First public Jewish [synagogue](#) in [Berlin](#): 1712

Jews build first North American [synagogue](#) in Lower Manhattan, Shearith  
Israel: 1730

[England](#) grants naturalization rights to Jews in the colonies: 1740

Wahhabi "fundamentalist" movement arises in [Islam](#): ca. 1750

Parliament extends naturalization rights to Jews resident in [England](#): 1753

First English [prayer book](#) for High Holidays is published in New York:  
1761

The Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, dedicate a [Sephardic synagogue](#),  
designed by leading Rhode Island architect Peter Harrison: 1763



"Father of [Reform](#) [Judaism]," Israel Jacobson: 1768-1828

Pius VI issues *Editto sopra gli ebrei*, "Edict over the Hebrew," suppressing the Jewish religion: 1775

Frances Salomon elected to South Carolina Provisional Congress; the first Jew to hold elected office in America: 1775

United States Declaration of Independence: 1776

America merchant and philanthropist [Judah Touro](#), funded first New Orleans synagogue: 1775-1854

[Moses Mendelssohn](#) (Jewish "enlightenment" scholar): 1729-1786

Although usually considered more liberal than other states, Rhode Island refuses to grant Jews Aaron Lopez and Isaac Eliezer citizenship stating "no person who is not of the Christian religion can be admitted free to this colony." 1762

[Portugal](#) holds the last public *Auto de Fe* "Act of Faith," a ceremony where the [Inquisition](#) announces its punishments, usually a death sentence of burning at the stake: 1765

Napoleon (France): 1769-1821

American Revolution; religious freedom guaranteed: 1775-1781

Joseph II of Austria rescinds the 513-year old law requiring Jews to wear distinctive badges: 1781

[Haym Solomon](#), a Polish Jew who arrived in New York in 1772, helps raise funds to finance the American cause in the Revolutionary War: 1781.

American philanthropist [Rebecca Gratz](#): 1781-1869

The Sultan of [Morocco](#) expells the Jews for the third time in recent years after they failed to pay an exorbitant ransom: 1783

[Zionist](#) author, journalist and and diplomat, [Mordechai Manuel Noah](#),  
1785-1851

Ratification of the U.S. Constitution means Jews may hold any federal  
office: 1788

French Revolution: 1789

Leading Jewish philanthropist, [Sir Moses Montefiore](#), created numerous  
agricultural settlements in Eretz Israel: 1784-1885

[Gershom Mendes Seixas](#), minister of New York's Jewish congregation, is  
invited to Washington's inaugural: 1789

Jews of Newport, [Rhode Island](#) welcome President George Washington.  
[George Washington writes letter](#) to Jewish community proclaiming  
religious liberty. 1790

French Jews granted full citizenship for the first time since the Roman  
Empire: September 27, 1791

Tsarist [Russia](#) confines Jews to [Pale of Settlement](#), between the Black and  
Baltic Seas: 1791

First American [Ashkenazi](#) synagogue, Rodeph Shalom, is established in  
Philadelphia: 1795

Napoleon, battle of the Pyramids in Islamic [Egypt](#): 1798

Napoleon's army moves from [Egypt](#), capturing [Haifa](#) and gets as far north  
as [Akko](#) which is successfully defended by the British: 1799

Muslim Wahhabis capture Mecca & Medina, raid Karbala: 1801-1804

The first American Jewish orphan care society established in Charleston,  
South Carolina: 1801.

English Statesman [Benjamin Disraeli](#): 1804- 1881

Polonies Talmud Torah, the first Jewish school on record in the United

States established in New York: 1808

"Brains of the Confederacy," [Judah P. Benjamin](#): 1811-1884

[Moses Hess](#), author, socialist and [Zionist](#): 1812-1875

President Madison appoints [Mordechai Noah](#) as consul to Tunis and then [rescinds](#) the appointment when the Tunisians object to dealing with a Jew: 1813

King Ferdinand VII of Portugal reestablishes the [Inquisition](#) six years after it was abolished by Joseph Bonaparte: 1814

Although born a Jew, he converted to Protestantism and later became the father of Communism, [Karl Marx](#): 1818-1883

Rise of the Jewish [Reform movement](#) in Europe ([Abraham Geiger](#)): mid-19th century

[Rebecca Gratz](#) establishes the first independent Jewish women's charitable society in Philadelphia: 1819

Head of the American [Reform](#) movement and founder of Hebrew Union College and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, [Isaac Mayer Wise](#): 1819-1900

A royal decree officially abolished the Spanish [Inquisition](#): 1820 (It really ended in 1834.)

Well-known physician and early [Zionist](#), [Leon Pinsker](#): 1821-1891

The Monroe Doctrine closes the American continent to foreign colonization: 1823

The first American Jewish periodical, *The Jew*, published in New York: 1823.

Society of Reformed Israelites is established in Charleston: 1824

Mordechai Emmanuel Lassalle led a failed movement to colonize New

York's Grand Island for Jewish refugees: 1825

In the last known *Auto Da Fe*, in Valencia, [Spain](#), a poor school master was executed for adhering to [Judaism](#): 1826

Reinterpretation of [Russia's](#) Conscription Law mandates 31 years of military service for Jews, beginning at age 12: 1827

French occupation of Muslim Algiers: 1830

German Jews begin to immigrate to America in substantial numbers: 1830.

Jewish Impressionist painter, whose works focused on the streets of Paris and landscapes, Camille Pissarro: 1830-1903

Louis Philippe of France grants state support to [synagogues](#): 1831

Although Jews had been living in Jamaica since 1655, they are finally given the right to vote: 1831

Banker and philanthropist, who donated millions of dollars to Jewish organizations and attempted to resettle Eastern European and Russian Jews by establishing the Jewish Colonial Association (JCA), [Baron De Hirsch](#): 1831-1896

Canada grants Jews political rights: 1832

The first book by an American Jewish woman, [Penina Moise's](#) *Fancy's Sketch Book*, published in South Carolina: 1833

An earthquake in [Tzfat](#) and [Tiberias](#) kills four thousand people and damages monuments and archeological sites: 1837

First [Passover](#) Haggadah printed in America: 1837.

[Rebecca Gratz](#) establishes Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia: 1838

Jews are accused of murdering a Franciscan friar in the [Damascus blood libel](#): 1840

First organized movement by American Jewry to protest false accusations of [blood libel in Damascus](#), [Syria](#): 1840

The first Hebrew printing press in India is established: 1840

The use of the word "Jew" as a verb comes into popular parlance in North America. "To Jew" means to strike a bargain or employ questionable business practices, according to this prejudicial usage: 1840's

[David Levy Yulee](#) of Florida elected to the United States Senate, the first Jew in Congress: 1841.

B'nai B'rith is organized, the first secular Jewish organization in the United States: 1843

[Lewis Charles Levin](#) was the first Jew elected to the U.S. House of Representatives: 1844

[Isaac Leeser](#) publishes his translation of the [Pentateuch](#) from the Hebrew into English: 1845

[Zionist](#) leader [Baron Edmond James de Rothschild](#): 1845-1934

[David Levy Yulee](#) of Florida is the first Jew elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served until 1861. Yulee resigned at the beginning of the Civil War to become a member of the Confederate Congress: 1845

Author, scholar and leader of the American Conservative movement, [Solomon Schechter](#): 1847-1915

In every part of [Germany](#), excluding Bavaria, Jews had been granted granted civil rights, allowing Gabriel Riesser, a Jewish advocate, to be elected vice-president of the Frankfurt Vor Parliament and to become a member of the National Assembly. The civil rights, however, existed on paper only and were not enforced: 1848

American poet whose "New Colossus" was inscribed on the Statue of Liberty: [Emma Lazerus](#): 1849-1887

Mount Sinai, the first Jewish Hospital in the United States is founded by a

group of mostly German Jewish immigrants: 1852

The Ghetto of [Prague](#) is officially abolished: 1852

Reign of Napoleon III of France: 1852-1870

[Isaac Leeser](#) publishes his translation of the [Bible](#) into English, the first complete Anglo-Jewish translation of the [Pentateuch](#): 1853

First acknowledged non-Muslim visitor permitted to enter [Temple Mount](#) since 1187 CE: 1855

Sabato Morais, rabbi of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, denounces the evils of American slavery from his pulpit: 1856.

[Edgar Mortara](#), an Italian Jewish child, is abducted by Papal Guards and placed in a monastery: 1858

"Yiddish Mark Twain," famed novelist, Shalom Alechem Rabinowitz: 1859-1916

Kaiser William II of Germany: 1859-1941 (Reign 1888-1918)

First neighborhood, [Mishkenot Sha'ananim](#), built outside Jerusalem's walls: 1860

Frenchman Adolphe Crémieux launches the Alliance Israelite Universelle to defend Jewish rights and establish worldwide Jewish educational facilities: 1860

Father of [Zionism](#), [Theodore Herzl](#): 1860-1904

Major modern Jewish composer of nine symphonies, [Gustav Mahler](#): 1860-1911

[Henrietta Szold](#), founder of Hadassah, the American Woman's Zionist Organization: 1860-1945

Morris Raphall is the first [rabbi](#) to offer prayers at the opening session of Congress: 1860



[Judah Benjamin](#) becomes attorney general of the Confederacy, the first Jew to hold a cabinet-level office in any American government: 1861

1,200 Jews fought for the Confederacy and 6,000 for the Union, including nine generals and 21 colonels in the American Civil War: 1861-1865

Essayist and publicist who headed the Jewish and Zionist Organization during the 1930s, was editor of *He-Tsefria* and published a history of Zionism, Nahum Sokolow: 1861-1936

[Moses Hess](#) writes *Rome and Jerusalem*: 1862

General Ulysses S. [Grant expels Jewish civilians](#) issues General Order No. 11 expelling the Jews "as a class" from the area under the jurisdiction of the Union army in his military department: 1862

Jacob Frankel is appointed first Jewish chaplain in the United States Army: 1862

[Judah P. Benjamin](#) is appointed Secretary of State of the Confederacy: 1862

[Leon Pinsker](#) writes *Autoemancipation* and argues for creation of a Jewish state: 1864.

Jews become a majority in [Jerusalem](#): 1866

[Switzerland](#), a hotbed of anti-Jewish edicts grants Jews equal rights only after threats by the United States, France and Britain: 1866

First rabbinical school in America, Maimonides College, is founded in Philadelphia: 1867

The original [Ku Klux Klan](#) is organized to maintain "white supremacy": 1867

[Hungary](#) passes legislation emancipating the Jews: 1867

Suez Canal opens: 1869

Ghettos abolished in [Italy](#): 1870

The Edict of Pope Nicholas III which required compulsory attendance of Jews at conversion sermons since 1278 is abolished: 1870

First [Yiddish](#) and [Hebrew](#) newspaper in America is published: 1871

The the first American kosher cookbook, *Jewish Cookery Book*, by Esther Jacobs Levy is published: 1871

[Reform Judaism](#) in U.S. establishes Union of American Hebrew Congregations: 1873

Poet laureate of the Jewish national movement, authored "In City of Slaughter," "El Ha Tsippor-To the Bird" and "Metai Midbar-Dead of the Desert, [Hayim Nahman Bialik](#): 1873-1934

Leading theologian of the [Reform](#) movement, refused to escape Nazi Germany and spent five years in [Terezin \(Theresienstadt\) concentration camp](#), [Leo Baeck](#): 1873-1956

Eric Weiss, better known as [Harry Houdini](#), the master escape artist, was born into an orthodox home: 1874-1926

Young Men's Hebrew Associations in New York and Philadelphia become prototypes for the more than 120 YMHAs established throughout the US in the next 15 years. In the 20th century, many of these evolve into Jewish Community Centers.

Statesman and scientist [Chaim Weizmann](#): 1874-1952

[Isaac Mayer Wise](#) founds Hebrew Union College, the rabbinical seminary of the Reform movement, in Cincinnati: 1875

New Hampshire becomes the last state to offer Jews political equality: 1877.

Petah Tikvah (Gate of Hope) founded as agricultural colony by orthodox Jews. Although it was abandoned in 1881 after Arab attacks, it was reestablished in 1883 after the [First Aliyah](#): 1878

[Zionist](#), physicist, Nobel Prize winner and discoverer of the special and general theory of relativity [Albert Einstein](#): 1879-1955

[Zionist](#) leader [Joseph Trumpeldor](#): 1880-1920

[Zionist](#) leader, founder of the New Zionist Organization, [Haganah](#), [Jewish Legion](#), [Irgun](#), Betar, [Revisionist Party](#), [Vladimir Jabotinsky](#): 1880-1939

[Ottoman](#) government announces permission for foreign (non-Ottoman) Jews to settle throughout Ottoman Empire: 1881.

Start of mass migrations of eastern European Jews: 1881

French occupation of Muslim [Tunisia](#): 1881

[Samuel Gompers](#) founds the Federation of Unions, the forerunner of the American Federation of Labor: 1881

May Laws restricting the movements and conduct of Jews are enacted in Russia: 1881

The word "pogrom" enters the English language, as Russian mobs begin a series of violent attacks against Jews and their property: 1881

British occupation of Muslim [Egypt](#): 1882

First *halutz* (pioneering) movement, [Bilu](#), founded in Kharkov Russia: 1882.

Ottoman government adopts policy to allow Jewish pilgrims and business-people to visit Palestine, but not settle: 1882.

[Hibbat Tzion](#) societies founded: 1882

Czar Alexander III issues the May Laws banishing Jews from rural areas in an effort to "cause one-third of the Jews to emigrate, one-third to accept baptism and one-third to starve." 1882

[Leo Pinsker](#) published "Autoemanicipation" suggesting a Jewish

homeland: 1882

[First Aliyah](#) (large-scale immigration), mainly from Russia: 1882-1903

First Conference of [Hovevei Zion Movement](#): 1884

Ottoman government closes Palestine to foreign (non-Ottoman) Jewish business, but not to Jewish pilgrims: 1884.

Reform Jewish [Pittsburgh Platform](#): 1885

Scientist who developed the theory on the nature of the atom, rescued from [Nazi Germany](#), Neils Bohr: 1885-1962

Sir Nathaniel Meyer Rothschild becomes the first Jew in England's in the House of Lords. The Christian oath was amended so that non-Christians could also serve in the House of Lords: 1885

Philosopher, author, helped create the Free Jewish House of Study in Frankfurt, Franz Rosenweig: 1886-1929

Etz Chaim, the first yeshiva for Talmudic studies in the United States, established in New York: 1886.

Statesman [David Ben-Gurion](#): 1886-1973

Jewish Theological Seminary opens in New York and, later, becomes the intellectual center of the [Conservative](#) movement: 1887

Famous artist [Marc Chagall](#): 1887-1990

Jewish Publication Society of America is founded to publish English books of Jewish interest: 1888

European powers press Ottoman government to allow foreign (non-Ottoman) Jews to settle in Palestine provided they do not do so en masse: 1888.

Hebrew novelist and Nobel prize winner, [Samuel Joseph Agnon](#): 1888-1970

The Educational Alliance founded on the Lower East Side to assist Eastern European immigrants: 1889.

Grand Duke Segai orders the expulsion of 14,00 Jewish families living in Moscow. Those who refuse to convert or become prostitutes are sent to the [Pale of Settlement](#): 1891

Christian [Zionist](#) William E. Blackstone and 413 prominent Americans petition President Benjamin Harrison to support resettlement of Russian Jews in Palestine: 1891

Baron de Hirsh donates 2 million pounds and establishes the Jewish Colonial Association in order to resettle 3 million Russian Jews in agricultural areas in other countries: 1891

Workmen's Circle established to promote [Yiddishist](#) and socialist ideas among the masses of Jewish laborers: 1892

American Jewish Historical Society established: 1892.

Ottoman government forbids sale of state land to foreign (non-Ottoman) Jews in Palestine: 1892.

National Council of Jewish Women founded in Chicago: 1893.

French general staff officer [Alfred Dreyfus](#) is sentenced to life on Devil's Island in the Dreyfus Affair: 1894

[Sholem Aleichem](#) begins writing the first episode of the life of Tevye the Dairyman: 1894

Last Russian Czar, commissioned what became the anti-Semitic "[Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#)," Nicholas II: 1894-1917

Artist known for his passionate and often disturbing use of color and form, Chaim Soutine (Smiliouchi): 1894-1943

[Lillian Wald](#) founds Henry Street Settlement: 1895

[Theodor Herzl](#) publishes [Der Judenstaat](#), *The Jewish State* ([Zionism](#)):

1896

[First Jewish Zionist congress](#) convened by [Theodor Herzl](#) in Basle, Switzerland, [Zionist Organization](#) Founded: 1897

Yiddish Socialist Labor party (the Bund) is founded in Russia: 1897

[Abraham Cahan](#) founds leading Yiddish newspaper, *Jewish Daily Forward* in New York: 1897

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), later part of Yeshiva University, begins training Orthodox rabbis: 1897.

Eastern European immigrants organize a Union of Orthodox Congregations, whose viewpoint clashes with that of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC): 1898.

Perhaps the greatest composer of the 20th century, whose works include "Rhapsody in Blue," [George Gershwin](#): 1898-1936

Fourth Prime Minister of Israel, [Golda Meir](#): 1898-1978

Acting on behalf of [Col. Dreyfus](#), Emile Zola publishes *J'Accuse*: 1898

A section of the [Old City Wall](#) is removed to facilitate the entrance of Kaiser Wilhelm II of [Germany](#) and his entourage on his visit to [Jerusalem](#): 1898.

Emile Zola wins a new trial for [Alfred Dreyfus](#), and despite new charges, Dreyfus is acquitted and promoted to Major: 1899

[Theodor Herzl](#) establishes the [Jewish Colonial Trust](#), the financial arm of the [Zionist](#) movement: 1899

American composer and conductor best known for "Appalachian Spring," "Billy the Kid" and "Rodeo," [Aaron Copland](#): 1900-1990

Founding of the Modern Jewish [Orthodox movement](#): early 20th century.

The Industrial Removal Office, organized by several Jewish



organizations, relocate Jewish immigrants from the Lower East Side to communities across the United States: 1901.

The [Fifth Zionist Congress](#) decides to establish Keren Kayemet LeIsrael (KKL) - The Jewish National Fund: 1901.

[Theodor Herzl](#) publishes a romantic utopian novel, *Altneuland, Old-New Land*, a vision of the Jewish State: 1902

Russian Jews organize U.S.-based Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to serve as counselors, interpreters, attorneys, etc.: 1902

Composer and partner of [Oscar Hammerstein II](#) (1895-1960), known for "Oklahoma!" and "South Pacific," Richard Rogers: 1902-1979

[Solomon Schechter](#) comes from England to America to head the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Conservative Judaism's rabbinical seminary: 1902

British Government proposes "[Uganda Scheme](#)," rejected by the [Sixth Zionist Congress](#): 1903.

Kishinev massacre increases Jewish exodus from Russia: 1903

Oscar Straus is appointed Secretary of Commerce and Labor by President Roosevelt, the first Jew to serve in the U.S. Cabinet: 1903

500,000 Jews flee Russia, 90% go to the United States: 1903-1907

[Second Aliyah](#), mainly from Russia and Poland, 1904-14

Gimnazia Herzilia, the first Hebrew high school, opens in Tel Aviv: 1905

Zionist Labor Party (Poale Zion) formed in Minsk in an effort to combine [Zionism and Socialism](#): 1905

American Jewish Committee is founded to safeguard Jewish rights internationally: 1906

[Sholem Aleichem](#) comes to New York from Russia to write for the

American Yiddish theater. The musical *Fiddler on the Roof* is based on his story *Tevye's Daughters*.

First Hebrew high school founded in [Jaffa](#) and [Bezalel](#) school founded in [Jerusalem](#): 1906

Physicist [Albert A. Michelson](#) is first American Jew to win [Nobel Prize](#): 1907

Revolution by "young Turks" depose Sultan Abdul Hamid the Damned under [Ottoman](#): 1908

[Turkey](#) grants Jews political rights: 1908

Hijaz Railway from Damascus to Medina: 1908

Julius Rosenwald, American merchant and philanthropist, converts Sears, Roebuck and Co. into the largest mail-order house in the world: 1909.

Second [Yemenite](#) Aliyah: 1908-1914

First [kibbutz](#), Degania, founded: 1909

Founding of [Tel Aviv](#) as Hebrew speaking Jewish city: 1909

[Hashomer](#), the first Jewish self-defense organization is founded to replace Arab guards protecting Jewish settlements: 1909

Russian neurologist Sikowsky testifies that Jews use Christian blood for ritual purposes in the Beilis Trial (Russia): 1911-1913

Hall of Fame baseball player [Hank Greenberg](#): 1911-1986

A tragic fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York's Lower East Side kills 146 women, mostly Jews: 1911

Palestinian journalist Najib Nasser publishes first book in Arabic on [Zionism](#) entitled, "Zionism: Its History, Objectives and Importance." Palestinian newspaper "Filatsin" begins addressing its readers as "Palestineans" and warns them about Zionism: 1911.

United States abrogates treaty of 1832 with Russia because of Russia's refusal to honor passports of Jewish Americans: 1912

[Henrietta Szold](#) founds Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization: 1912

Haifa's [Technion](#) is founded: 1912

Agudah (Agudat Israel) formed as the World Organization of Orthodox Jewry at Katowitz: 1912

12 of the 100 members of the Reichstag (German parliament) are Jewish: 1912

Trial of [Leo Frank](#) in Atlanta leads to the founding of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith: 1913

[Solomon Schechter](#), president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, founds the United Synagogue of America (later the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism): 1913

First Arab Nationalist Congress meets in Paris: 1913.

Commander of the [Etzel](#), statesman and Israeli prime minister, [Menachem Begin](#): 1913-1993

Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers is established: 1914

## **World War I: 1914-1918**

Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand assassinated in Sarajevo prompting World War One: 1914

During First World War, Russian forces in retreat drive 600,000 Jews from their homes: 1914

American Jewish Relief Committee established to distribute funds to needy Jews; it later combined with other Jewish relief organizations to become the Joint Distribution Committee: 1914

The Ottoman empire enters the war on the side of Germany: 1914.

Moses Alexander elected Governor of Idaho - the first Jew to win the governorship of an American state: 1915.

[MacMahon-Hussein correspondence](#): 1915

[Zion Mule Corps](#) established by [Yosef Trumpeldor](#) in British army: 1915

Avshalom Feinburg and [Aaron Aaronsohn](#) form [NILI](#) (*Netzah Israel Lo Yeshaker*), recruited to spy on the Turks for the British: 1915

[Moshe Dayan](#), [Haganah](#) fighter, Israeli minister of Defense: 1915-1981

[Leo Frank](#), a southern American Jew falsely convicted of murdering a 14 year-old girl is hung by a lynch mob: 1915

Arthur Miller, American playwright whose works include, "Death of a Salesman," "The Crucible" and "A View From the Bridge." 1915-

[Louis Dembitz Brandeis](#) is first Jew appointed to the Supreme Court: 1916

[Germany](#) accuses Jews of evading active service in WWI, despite 100,000 Jews serving, 12% higher than their population ratio: 1916

[France](#) and [Britain](#) divide up the Middle East in the [Sykes-Picot Agreement](#): 1916

The National Jewish Welfare Board established to care for the religious needs of Jews serving in the U.S. armed forces: 1917.

Surrender of Ottoman forces in Jerusalem to Allied Forces under General Sir Edmund Allenby: 1917.

American Jewish Congress is founded: 1918

End of World War I: 1918.

Jewish educational summer camping is launched in the United States with what came to be known as the Cejwin Camps: 1919.

Versailles Peace Conference decides that the conquered Arab provinces will not be restored to Ottoman rule: 1919.

First Palestinian National Congress meeting in Jerusalem sends two memoranda to Versailles rejecting [Balfour Declaration](#) and demanding independence: 1919.

The San Remo Conference awards administration of the former [Turkish](#) territories of [Syria](#) and [Lebanon](#) to [France](#), and Palestine, Transjordan, and Mesopotamia (Iraq) to [Britain](#): 1920.

British civilian administration inaugurated: [Sir Herbert Samuel](#) appointed first High Commissioner: 1920.

Second and third Palestinian National Congress' held: 1920.

Immigration laws "reformed" to effectively exclude Eastern European Jews and other immigrants. Further restrictions imposed in 1924: 1921.

Fourth Palestinian National Congress, convenes in Jerusalem, decides to send delegation to London to explain case against Balfour: 1921.

Arab [riots](#) in [Jaffa](#) and other cities: 1921.

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## JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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# Islamic Unrest and Realignment in the Middle East

**(ca. 1914-Present - Here to 1918)**

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[Sykes-Picot Agreement](#) divides Middle East into spheres of British and French influence: 1916.

Start of Arab revolt against [Ottoman](#) Turkish rule: 1916

British capture Baghdad: 1917

Jewish Telegraphic Agency is founded: 1917

Four-hundred years of [Ottoman](#) rule ended by British conquest: 1917

[The Balfour Declaration](#) favors Jewish Palestinian State: 1917

As WWI comes closer to [Tel-Aviv](#) and Jaffa, the Turkish Governor of Jaffa orders all Jews to leave Tel-Aviv and Jaffa: 1917

Jews granted full rights in Russia: 1917

Russian Revolution breaks out, heavy fighting in the South and West, where over 3 million Jews live. Over 2000 pogroms took place, claiming the lives of up to 200,000 Jews in the next three years: 1917

The [United States declared war on Germany](#). Approximately 250,000 Jewish soldiers (20% of whom were volunteers) served in the U.S. Army,

roughly 5.7% while Jews only made up 3.25% of the general American population: 1917

The Jewish Welfare Board is created and serves the social and religious requirements of Jewish soldiers; expands after the war: 1917

355,000 people chose representatives for the first American Jewish Congress: 1917

Over 2,700 men volunteer for the new [Jewish Legion](#) of the British Army which fought in [Transjordan](#), among other places: 1917

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky ousted Kerensky and took over the Russian government: 1917

British General Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Turks, ending [Ottoman](#) rule: 1917

Damascus taken by T.E. Lawrence and Arabs: 1918

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# JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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## British Rule in Palestine

(1918-47)

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Treaty of Versailles formally ends World War I. Out of an estimated 1.5 million Jewish soldiers in all the armies, approximately 170,000 were killed and over 100,000 cited for valor: 1918

Nahum Zernach founds the Moscow-based [Habimah Theater](#) which receives acclaim for "The Dybbuk." 1918

[Egyptian](#) revolution: 1919

[Chaim Weizmann](#) heads [Zionist](#) delegation at Versailles Peace Conference: 1919

[Third Aliyah](#), mainly from [Russia](#): 1919-23

Emir Faisal wrote a [letter](#) to [Felix Frankfurter](#) supporting [Zionism](#), "We Arabs...wish the Jews a most hearty welcome." 1919

Commander of the [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#), [Mordechai Anielewicz](#): 1919-1943

League of Nations established in an effort to prevent further wars: 1919

[Histadrut](#) (Jewish labor federation) and [Haganah](#) (Jewish defense organization) founded: 1920

[Vaad Leumi](#) (National Council) set up by Jewish community (*yishuv*) to conduct its affairs: 1920

Keren Hayesod created for education, absorption and the development of rural settlements in Eretz-Israel: 1920

[Chaim Weizmann](#) elected president of the [World Zionist Organization](#): 1920

Fall of Tel Hai to Arab attackers; [Joseph Trumpeldor](#) and five men under his command killed: 1920

[Mandate](#) for the Land of Israel given over to Britain on the condition that the [Balfour Declaration](#) be implemented, San Remo Conference: 1920

[Sir Herbert Samuel](#), British statesman, appointed High Commissioner of Palestine: 1920

Henry Ford's newspaper, [The Dearborn Independent](#), begins publishing its anti-Semitic propaganda, including the [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#): 1920

Jaffa riots, 45 Jews killed: 1921

Kingdom of [Iraq](#) established: 1921

First moshav, Nahalal, founded in the Jezreel Valley: 1921

[Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook](#) and Rabbi Ya'akov Meir are elected the first two chief Rabbis of Eretz-Israel: 1921

Famous Hungarian Jewish poet and paratrooper who fought in WWII, [Hannah Szenes \(Senesh\)](#): 1921-1944

Britain granted [Mandate for Palestine \(Land of Israel\) by League of Nations](#): 1922

[Transjordan](#) set up on three-fourths of the British mandate area, forbidding Jewish immigration, leaving one-fourth for the Jewish national home: 1922

Jewish Agency representing Jewish community vis-à-vis Mandate authorities set up: 1922

[Mordecai M. Kaplan](#) founds the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, the cradle of the [Reconstructionist](#) movement: 1922

The United States Congress and President Harding approve the [Balfour Declaration](#): 1922

Supreme Muslim Council created under the jurisdiction of the British government to centralize religious affairs and institutions, but is corrupted by the overzealous Husseini family who used it as an anti-Jewish platform: 1922

Lenin creates the [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics](#): 1922

Harvard's president proposes a quota on the number of Jews admitted. After a contentious debate, he withdrew the recommendation: 1922

League of Nations Council approves Mandate for Palestine: 1922.

First [British](#) census of Palestine shows total population 757,182 (11% Jewish): 1922.

Fifth Palestinian National Congress in Nablus, agrees to economic boycott of Zionists: 1922.

Palestine constitution suspended by British because of Arab refusal to cooperate. 1923

Overthrow of [Ottoman](#) Muslim rule by "young Turks" (Kemal Ataturk) and establishment of secular state: 1923

Sixth Palestinian national Congress held in Jaffa: 1923.

[Technion](#), first institute of technology, founded in [Haifa](#): 1924

[Fourth Aliyah](#), mainly from [Poland](#): 1924-32

Benjamin Frankel starts Hillel Foundation. The first Hillel House opens at



the University of Illinois, offers religious and social services: 1924

Caliphate officially abolished: 1924

The first conference of the [General Zionist](#) movement is held in [Jerusalem](#): May 11, 1924

Ultra-Orthodox Jews found an agricultural settlement between Ramat Gan and Petah Tikva: Bnei- Brak: May 14, 1924.

Pahlevi dynasty in Persia (= "Iran": 1935): 1925-1979

[Revisionist Movement](#) founded by [Zeev Jabotinsky](#): 1925

[Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) opened on [Mt. Scopus](#): 1925

[Edna Ferber](#) is the first American Jew to win Pulitzer Prize in fiction: 1925

Palestinean National Congress meets in Jaffa: 1925.

[France](#) proclaims Republic of [Lebanon](#). 1926

Warner Brothers produces drama of Jewish assimilation, "The Jazz Singer," the first film with sound: 1927

[Britain](#) recognizes independence of Transjordan. 1928

Seventh Palestinean National Congress convened in [Jerusalem](#); established a new forty-eight member executive committee: 1928.

Yeshiva College is dedicated in New York: 1928

2,000 Arabs attack Jews praying at the [Kotel](#) on the [9th of Av](#). Arabs view British refusal to condemn the attacks as support: 1929

[Hebron Jews massacred](#) by Arab militants: 1929

[Anne Frank](#), Holocaust victim whose diary, written during the Nazi Occupation became famous: 1929-1945

[Fifth Aliyah](#), from Germany: 1929-1939

Hope-Simpson report, predecessor to Passfield [White Paper](#), recommends and end to all [Jewish immigration](#) to Eretz-Israel: 1930

Lord Passfield issues his [White Paper](#) banning further land acquisition by Jews and slowing Jewish immigration: 1930

Salo Wittmayer Baron joins the faculty of Columbia University, his is the first chair in Jewish history at a secular university in the United States: 1930.

[Etzel \(the Irgun\)](#), Jewish underground organization, founded: 1931

Second British census of Palestine shows total population of 1,035,154 (16.9% Jewish): 1930.

The Nahum Zemach-founded Moscow-based Habimah Theater which received acclaim for "The Dybbuk" moves to Eretz-Israel: 1931

Kingdom of [Saudi Arabia](#) established: 1932

British Mandate over [Iraq](#) terminated, Iraq gains independence: 1932

[Herbert Lehman](#) was elected New York's first Jewish governor; from that time on, Jews formed a pact with the Democratic Party: 1932

First Maccabia athletic games take place with representatives from 14 countries: 1932

German Chancellor von Papen persuaded President von Hindenburg to offer Hitler the chancellorship: 1932

Formation of Istiqlal Party as first constituted Palestinian-Arab political party; Awni Abdul-Hadi elected president: 1932.

The American Jewish Congress declares a boycott on German goods to protest the [Nazi](#) persecution of Jews: 1933.

Assassination of [Chaim Arlozorov](#): 1933

[Fifth Aliyah](#), mainly from [Germany](#): 1933-39

[Adolf Hitler](#) becomes Chancellor of Germany: 1933

[Germany](#) begins anti-Jewish boycott: 1933

Cardinal Pacelli, who later became [Pope Pius XII](#), signed the Hitler Concordat; whereby the Vatican accepted National Socialism: 1933

[Albert Einstein](#), upon visiting the United States, learns that Hitler had been elected and decided not to return to Germany, takes up position at Princeton: 1933

Riots in Jaffa and Jerusalem to protest British "pro-Zionist" policies: 1933.

In [Afghanistan](#), two thousand Jews are expelled from towns and forced to live in the wilderness: 1934

American Jews cheer Detroit Tigers' [Hank Greenberg](#) when he refuses to play ball on Yom Kippur. In 1938, with five games left to the season, Greenberg's 58 home runs are two shy of Babe Ruth's record. When several pitchers walk him rather than giving him a shot at the record, many believe major league baseball did not want a Jew to claim that place in America's national sport: 1934.

Jewish rights in [Germany](#) rescinded by [Nuremberg laws](#): 1935

Hakibbutz Hadati, the religious kibbutz movement is founded: 1935

Regina Jonas was ordained by Liberal ([Reform](#)) Rabbi Max Dienemann in Germany, becoming the first woman rabbi: 1935.

[Ze'ev Jabotinsky](#) founds the New Zionist Organization: 1935

Official establishment of the Palestine Arab Party in Jerusalem; [Jamal al-Husseini](#) elected president: 1935.

[Anti-Jewish riots](#) instigated by Arab militants: 1936-39

Supported by the Axis powers, the Arab Higher Committee encourages raids on Jewish communities in Eretz-Israel: 1936

Leon Blum becomes the first Jew elected premier of France, enacts many social reforms: 1936

The first of the [Tower and Stockade Settlements](#) (Tel Amel) Nir David is erected: 1936

[Syria](#) ratifies the Franco-Syrian treaty; France grants Syria and Lebanon independence: 1936

World Jewish Congress convened in Geneva: 1936

[Peel Commission](#) investigated Arab riots, concluded Arab claims were "baseless." 1936

[Reform](#) Jewish [Columbus Platform](#): 1937

British declare Arab Higher Committee in Palestine illegal and [Mufti of Jerusalem](#) escapes to [Syria](#). 1937.

The [Peel Commission](#) recommends the partition of Palestine between Jews and Arabs: 1937.

[Chaim Weizmann](#) and [David Ben-Gurion](#) accept partition plan, despite fierce opposition at the 20th Zionist Congress: 1937

John Woodhead declares partition unworkable after Arab riots: 1937

Central conference of American Rabbis reaffirm basic reform philosophies in the Columbus Platform: 1937

[Kristallnacht](#) — German Jewish synagogues burned down: Nov. 9, 1938

Charles E. Coughlin, a Roman Catholic priest, launches media campaign in America against Jews: 1938

The [Dominican Republic](#) is the only country out of 32 at the [Evian Conference](#) willing to help Jews trying to escape [Nazi Germany](#): 1938

Chamberlain declares "peace in our time" after allowing [Hitler](#) to annex the Sudetenland in the [Munich Agreement](#): September 29, 1938

Catholic churches ring bells and fly [Nazi](#) flags to welcome [Hitler's](#) troops in Austria: 1938

Hershel Grynszpan, 17, a German refugee, assassinates Ernst von Rath, the third secretary to the German embassy in Paris: 1938

More than 100,000 Jews march in an anti-Hitler parade in New York's Madison Square Garden: 1938

President Roosevelt appoints [Zionist](#) and Jewish activist [Felix Frankfurter](#) to the Supreme Court: 1939

[Jewish immigration](#) severely limited by [British White Paper](#): 1939

[S.S. St. Louis](#), carrying 907 Jewish refugees from Germany, is turned back by Cuba and the United States: 1939

Jewish songwriter [Irving Berlin](#) introduces his song "God Bless America." He also wrote "White Christmas": 1939

## **World War II: 1939-1945**

Nazis establish [ghettos in Poland](#): 1940

British government authorizes the [Jewish Agency](#) to recruit 10,000 Jews to form Jewish units in the British army: 1940.

British refuse illegal immigrant ship, the [Patria](#), permission to dock in Palestine: 1940.

British and France guarantee Syrian independence. 1941

[Lohamei Herut Yisrael \(Lehi\)](#) or [Stern Gang](#) underground movement formed: 1941

[Palmach](#), strike force of [Haganah](#), set up: May 15, 1941

[Rabbi Stephen S. Wise](#) publicizes Riegner report confirming mass murder of European Jews: 1942

[Biltmore Conference of American Zionists](#): 1942

Nazi leaders refine the "[Final Solution](#)" -- genocide of the Jewish people -- at [Wannsee Conference](#): 1942

[Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#): 1943

[Palmach](#) parachutes into enemy lines in Europe: 1943

British deport [illegal immigrants](#) to Cyprus: 1943

Raphael Lemkin, an international lawyer who escaped from Poland to the U.S. in 1941, coins the term *genocide* to describe the [Nazi extermination](#) of European Jews: 1943.

[Zionist Biltmore Conference](#), held at Biltmore Hotel in New York, formulates new policy of creating a "Jewish Commonwealth" in Palestine and organizing a Jewish army: 1943.

[Jewish Brigade](#) formed as part of British forces: 1944

FDR establishes [War Refugee Board](#). For most victims of Nazism, it comes too late: 1944.

Camp for Jewish war refugees is opened at Oswego, New York: 1944

[The Nazi German Holocaust against Jews: 1939/1942-1945](#)

American drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending World War II: 1945

## **Postwar Period**

[International tribunal for war crimes](#) is established at Nuremberg: 1945

Bess Myerson becomes the first Jewish woman to win the Miss America



Pageant: 1945.

Covenant of [League of Arab States](#), emphasizing Arab character of Palestine, signed in Cairo by [Egypt](#), [Iraq](#), [Lebanon](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Syria](#), Transjordan, and [Yemen](#): 1945.

[United Nations](#) established: 1945.

[President Truman](#) asks Britain to allow 100,000 Jews into Palestine: 1945.

[Arab League Council](#) decides to boycott goods produced by Zionist firms in Palestine: 1945.

[Irgun](#) and Stern Gang [blow up King David Hotel](#) in Jerusalem: 1946.

Partition of India and Pakistan: 1947

[Steamer Exodus](#) repelled by forces from shores of Palestine: July 1947

[UN proposes the establishment of Arab and Jewish states in the Land: 1947](#)

Arab Higher Committee for Palestine rejects [UN Partition Plan](#): 1947.

Three Jews are hanged for involvement in [Acre Prison break](#) and two British sergeants are executed in reprisal. 1947.

[Scrolls](#) dating from approximately 22 B.C.E. are discovered at Qumran, near the [Dead Sea](#): 1947

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## The Twelve Tribes of Israel



Source: [The Pedagogic Center, The Department for Jewish Zionist Education, The Jewish Agency for Israel](#), (c) 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000,  
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## Asher

Asher was the eighth son of [Jacob](#) and the father of the tribe of Asher, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). His mother was Zilpah, Leah's maidservant. [Leah](#) named him Asher, saying "Happy am I" ([Genesis 30:13](#)). Asher played a role in the plot to sell his brother [Joseph](#) into slavery. Asher and his four sons and daughter later settled in Egypt. Jacob blessed Asher on his deathbed, saying: "From Asher will come the richest food; he will provide the king's delights" ([Genesis 49:20](#))

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Benjamin

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Benjamin was the son of [Jacob](#) and [Rachel](#) and father of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). Originally named Ben-oni, or "son of my affliction" by his mother as she lay dying in labor, his name was later changed to Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand" ([Genesis 48:14](#)). Next to [Joseph](#), he was his favorite son. Benjamin the twelfth son of Jacob and born after Joseph was sold into slavery. After the family was invited to Egypt, Joseph sabotaged Benjamin's sack by putting a silver cup in it and accusing the brothers of stealing. Joseph thought Benjamin would remain in Egypt but [Judah](#) offered to take his place, saying that his father would be devastated if Benjamin did not return. Jacob later blesses Benjamin while on his deathbed, calling Benjamin "a vicious wolf, devouring the prey in the morning, and dividing the spoil at night" ([Genesis 49:27](#)).

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Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Dan

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Son of [Jacob](#) and Bilhah ([Leah](#)'s maidservant) and father of the tribe of Dan and one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). Dan was one of the brothers involved in the plot to sell his brother [Joseph](#) into slavery. Later, Dan's father Jacob sent him to Egypt to buy corn during the severe famine in Canaan. Dan receives a blessing from Jacob that "Dan shall judge his people" ([Genesis 49:16](#)). Similarly, one explanation of the name Dan is that when Rachel was convinced that she was unable to have children, she cried "[God](#) has judged me" ([Genesis 30:5](#)). The region of Dan in the [Book of Judges](#) is located in the far north of Canaan and referred to early in Genesis during [Abraham](#)'s chasing of Chedorlaomer ([Genesis 14:14](#)). The tribe of Dan also settled in the southern part of the country and since the tribal territory covered both northern and southern parts of the country the expression "from Dan to Beer-sheba" indicates the entire span of the Israelite land.

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Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Gad

Gad was the sixth son of [Jacob](#) and father of the tribe of Gad, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). His mother was Zilpah, Jacob's concubine. Gad's name comes from the Hebrew word troop. [Leah](#) named him Gad, saying "A troop is coming." He was part of the plot to sell [Joseph](#) to Egypt and later sent to Egypt to buy corn during the famine in [Canaan](#). Gad later moved to Egypt and lived there with his seven sons. Jacob blessed Gad on his deathbed, saying: "Raiders will raid Gad, but he will raid at their heel" ([Genesis 49:19](#)).

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Issachar

Ninth son of [Leah](#) and father of Issachar, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). One interpretation of his name is "man of reward" (Hebrew: *shcar*). Issachar was the product of the mandrake incident ([Genesis 30:9-18](#)) and was involved in the plot to sell his brother [Joseph](#) into slavery. Issachar settled in Egypt after the famine in [Canaan](#) and had four sons: Tolah, Puvvah, Yov and Shimron. He receives a blessing from his father [Jacob](#) that he "bends his back to the load, working like a slave" ([Genesis 49:14-15](#)). The descendants of Issachar are men of learning according to Jewish tradition.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Judah

Fourth son of [Jacob](#) and father of the tribe of Judah, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). His name comes from the Hebrew word of gratitude. [Leah](#) gave birth to Judah and said "Now I will praise [God](#)" ([Genesis 30:35](#)) It was his idea to sell his brother [Joseph](#) to a Midianite slave trader rather than leave him to die in the pit ([Genesis 37:27](#)). He later became the spokesman for his father Jacob and his brothers when they traveled to Egypt during the famine in [Canaan](#). He marries Shua, a Canaanite woman, and has three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah is also involved with Tamar and has twin sons with her named Perez and Zerach.

The tribe of Judah inhabited [Jerusalem](#) during the reign of its kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#) and was later the kingdom of all of the southern tribes of Israel.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Levi

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Third son of [Jacob](#) and [Leah](#) and father of the tribe of Levi, from whom the Levites are descended. The tribe of Levi is one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). Since Leah had already given Jacob two sons, she said "Now my husband will be joined with me" ([Genesis 30:34](#)). The Levites were distinguished as servants to [God](#) because of their refusal to worship to Golden Calf ([Exodus 32: 26-29](#)). Levi's own three sons, Gerhson, Kahath and Merari, become Temple servants. After Levi's sister Dinah was raped by Shechem, he and his brother Simeon destroyed the entire town. Levi was later involved in the plot to sell his brother [Joseph](#) into slavery.

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Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Naphtali

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Naphtali was the son of [Jacob](#) and Rachel's maidservant Bilhah and the father of the tribe of Naphtali, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). The tribe of Naphtali settled in northern [Canaan](#) and were described as brave soldiers in the Song of Deborah ([Judges 5:18](#)). Naphtali's blessing from his father called him "a running deer" ([Genesis 49:21](#)). Naphtali was given his name because [Rachel](#) said "With great wrestlings have I wrestled my sister" ([Genesis 30:8](#)).

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Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Reuben

Firstborn son of [Jacob](#) and [Leah](#) and father of the tribe of Reuben and one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). His name comes from the Hebrew meaning: "Look, a son." He appears in the story of the mandrakes as the one giving them to his mother ([Genesis 30:14](#)). Reuben has relations with Jacob's concubine Bilhah, angering Jacob and probably contributing to the curse of Reuben on Jacob's deathbed ([Genesis 49:4](#)). He succeeded in convincing his brothers not to kill [Joseph](#) but to trap him inside of a pit instead ([Genesis 37:22](#)). Later, when the family journeys to Egypt during the famine, he attempts to persuade his father that he should take responsibility for [Benjamin](#) while in Egypt ([Genesis 42:37](#)).

The tribe of Reuben settled west of the Jordan River and agreed to join the other tribes in the war against the [Philistines](#).

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Simeon

Simeon was the second son of [Jacob](#) and [Leah](#) and father of the tribe of [Simeon](#), one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). The Hebrew meaning of his name means "[God](#) has heard that I was unloved" ([Genesis 29:33](#)). He and his brother Levi destroyed the entire village of Shechem in retribution for the rape of their sister Dinah ([Genesis 34](#)). Simeon was a part of the plot to sell his brother [Joseph](#) into slavery. After the family was invited to Egypt during the famine in Canaan, he was appointed as the individual to stay behind as collateral for [Benjamin](#) so that his brothers would return from [Canaan](#).

The tribe of Simeon lived in the southernmost part of the Land of Israel.

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Zebulun

Tenth son of [Jacob](#) and sixth of [Leah](#) and father of the tribe of Zebulun, one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). When he was born Leah said "God has provided me with a good dowry" (Hebrew: zvad). He was part of the plot to sell [Joseph](#) into slavery, and later one of the group sent to Egypt to buy corn. He later lived in Egypt with his three sons Sered, Elon and Jahleel. Zebulun received the blessing from Jacob of: "Zebulun shall settle the seashores; he will be a harbour for ships; his border shall reach Sidon ([Genesis 49:13](#)). The tribe of Zebulun inhabited the northern land of [Canaan](#). Both the tribes of [Naphtali](#) and Zebulun are mentioned as brave soldiers in the Song of Deborah during the battle against Sisera ([Judges 5:18](#)).

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Ephraim

Ephraim was the brother of [Manasseh](#), and the son of [Joseph](#) and Asenath, Pharoah's daughter. [Jacob](#) adopted the two sons as part of the tribe of [Simeon](#) and [Reuben](#). Ephraim received the blessing of the firstborn, although Manasseh was the eldest, because Jacob foresaw that Ephraim's ancestors would be greater than his brother's ([Genesis 48:13-20](#)).

Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## Manasseh

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Manasseh was the son of [Joseph](#) and Asnat ([Pharoah](#)'s daughter) and brother of [Ephraim](#). Jacob adopts both Manasseh and his brother Ephraim as part of the tribe of [Simeon](#) and [Reuben](#). Although Manasseh was technically the eldest son, he does not receive the greater blessing. Ephraim does, as Jacob foresaw that his descendants were more worthy of the blessing than Manasseh's ([Genesis 48:13-20](#)).

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Sources: Bridger, David. Ed. [The New Jewish Encyclopedia](#), NY: Behrman House, 1976; [Navigating the Bible II](#)

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## The Jewish Virtual History Tour

### New Zealand

by Mara Weiss

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The development of the Jewish population in New Zealand began in the early decades of the 19th century. Jewish traders arrived in the 1830s, quickly establishing themselves throughout industry and commerce. Jews played a prominent role in the development of the country, most notably in trade with [Australia](#) and [Britain](#). Before New Zealand became a British Colony in 1840, the Jewish population consisted of fewer than 30 people.

In 1840, David Nathan, along with about a dozen other Jewish storekeepers and traders, founded the Auckland Jewish community in northern New Zealand. The congregation met to worship together as they conducted services and various other religious functions. On October 31, 1841, Nathan wed Rosetta Aarons in Kororareka, making history as the first Jewish [marriage](#) in New Zealand.

The second major hub of New Zealand Jewish life in the 1800s was just



south in Wellington. Very similar to Auckland, Wellington originally attracted traders. The first Jew to arrive was Abraham Hort, Jr. in 1840. He was followed by Albraham Hort, Sr. in 1843, who went to New Zealand hoping to found a community and promote planned immigration to relieve Jewish poverty in England. He founded the Wellington Hebrew Congregation in 1843 and, on January 7, the first Jewish service was held in Wellington.

In the 1860s, as gold was discovered in Otago and Westland, the Jewish population spread throughout New Zealand. While Auckland and Wellington still accounted for the majority of New Zealand's Jewish population, communities were established in Dunedin, Christchurch, Hokitika, Timaru, Nelson, and Hastings. In 1861, 326 Jews lived in New Zealand. By 1867, that number nearly quadrupled to 1,262 comprising 0.6% of the total population.

After having prayed in private homes for a number of years, the title deeds for the first Synagogue on The Terrace were received in 1868 and the Beth El Synagogue of Wellington was consecrated in 1870. Similarly, the Auckland Jews had been in a small building and, on November 9, 1885, the Auckland Synagogue was opened.

## Present Day New Zealand

In the 20th century, Jewish immigrants arrived primarily from [the former U.S.S.R](#) and [South Africa](#). Due to an extremely restrictive government policy on immigration, only a small number of Jewish refugees from persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe were admitted. As a result, very few Jews fleeing [Nazi Germany](#) found refuge in New Zealand around the time of [World War II](#). Today, the number of Jews in New Zealand was estimated at around 6,800, mostly residing in Auckland and Wellington.

Today, Jews continue to make up a tiny minority of the total New Zealand population. Immigration has led to four main groups: older families who came from the [United Kingdom](#) in the 1800s, lineage of European refugees from the 1930s and 1940s, families who emigrated from Britain in the 1950s, and recent immigrants from [South Africa](#), Israel and [the former Soviet Union](#).

[Synagogues](#) continue to be considered the center of Jewish communities in New Zealand. Auckland and Wellington each have two congregations,

one more Orthodox and the other Liberal Progressive. Congregations meet in Christchurch and Dunedin as well.

In the 1920s, the New Zealand Jewish Times became the first national monthly Jewish journal. Today, there is one monthly journal, the New Zealand Jewish Chronicle. There is also the [Chadashot](#), the Auckland [Zionist](#) magazine. Several Jewish organizations are present in modern day New Zealand. The [Australasian Union of Jewish Students \(AUJS\)](#) serves to unite Jewish Students throughout Australasia through promotion of Jewish identity. International B'nai B'rith lodges have been set up in Wellington (1960) and Auckland (1961). In 1971, Kadimah College was founded as a Jewish Day School in Auckland.

## Notable Jews of New Zealand

Over time, the Jews of New Zealand have made an array of contributions to culture, literature, medicine, journalism and politics. The most notable figure is London-born Julius Vogel (1835-1899). Vogel moved to New Zealand in 1861 after various failures in the Australian gold mines. By 1873, he was elected prime minister. In 1875, he was knighted. He was energetic and persuasive and has often been compared to [Benjamin Disraeli](#). Sir Arthus Myers was minister of munitions in World War I. In almost every city in New Zealand a Jew has been honored as its chief magistrate. Notable journalists include Vogel, Fred Pirani, Mark Cohen, Phineas Selig and Benjamin Farjeon the poet and novelist. Noteworthy in medicine include Sir Louis Barnett (surgery), Alfred Bernstein (chest diseases), and Bernard Myers (medical services). Joseph Nathan of Wellington established the Glaxo pharmaceutical company.

## Relations with Israel

The diplomatic relationship between New Zealand and Israel has progressively deteriorated. After 53 years of full diplomatic relations, the Israeli Embassy in Wellington was closed in 2002. At one time there were four missions in the South Pacific area in Canberra, Sydney, Wellington and Suva in Fiji. Presently, only Canberra remains open, which is now responsible for New Zealand-Israeli Relations. In May of 2004, two Jewish Agency officials were detained for more than an hour at Auckland Airport. One of them reported that he had been told by a customs agent, "we are treating all you Israelis the same — you are nothing but drug dealers and spies." The closure of the Embassy in Wellington is due to \$5.4 million in cost-cuts by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, but it is difficult

to pinpoint the cause to weakened relations.. Speculation has been made that as trade with Arab countries is a major player in industry in New Zealand, foreign policy may be effected. In June 2004, the New Zealand Government openly criticized Israel's policy of bulldozing Palestinian homes and donated \$534,000 to aid homeless Palestinians.

The growing Jewish community in New Zealand has not been adversely affected by the strains with Israel. Anti-Semitic attacks remain infrequent with few reports of anti-Jewish vandalism or violence. For the most part, anti-Semitism has been due to influence from abroad and has appeared particularly in periods of economic depression.

### **Orthodox Synagogues**

Auckland Hebrew Congregation  
108 Greys Avenue  
Auckland  
Website: <http://www.ahc.org.nz/>

Beth-El Synagogue  
80 Webb Street  
Wellington

### **Progressive Synagogues**

Beth Shalom Synagogue  
180 Manukau Road, Epsom 3  
Auckland  
Website: <http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~bethel/>

Temple Sinai  
147 Ghuznee Street  
Wellington

### **Representative/Community Organizations**

Wellington Jewish Community Centre  
80 Webb Street  
Wellington

Wellington and New Zealand Regional Jewish Council

54 Central Terrace 5  
Wellington

### **Groceries**

Kosher Co-op  
80 Webb Street  
Wellington

Dixon Street Delicatessen  
(4) 384-2436

Shelleys Catering  
13 Collingwood Street  
Freemans Bay

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Sources: [\*Encyclopedia Judaica\*](#)

Michael Zaidner, [\*Jewish Travel Guide 2000\*](#). Vallentine Mitchell & Co.  
2000

World Jewish Congress- [Jewish Communities of the World- New Zealand](#)

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### United Nations Security Council Resolution 1073

September 28, 1996

*The Security Council,*

*Having considered* the letter dated 26 September 1996 from the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the States Members of the League of Arab States, contained in document S/1996/790, that referred to the action by the Government of Israel to open an entrance to a tunnel in the vicinity of Al Aqsa Mosque and its consequent results,

*Expressing its deep concern* about the tragic events in Jerusalem and the areas of Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and the Gaza Strip, which resulted in a high number of deaths and injuries among the Palestinian civilians, and *concerned* also about the clashes between the Israeli army and the Palestinian police and the casualties on both sides,

*Recalling* its resolutions on Jerusalem and other relevant Security Council resolutions,

*Having discussed* the situation at its formal meeting on 27 September 1996, with the participation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of a number of countries,

*Concerned about* the difficulties facing the Middle East peace process and the deterioration of the situation, including *inter alia* its impact on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, and urging the parties to fulfil their obligations, including the agreements already reached,



*Concerned about* developments at the Holy Places of Jerusalem,

1. *Calls for* the immediate cessation and reversal of all acts which have resulted in the aggravation of the situation, and which have negative implications for the Middle East peace process;
2. *Calls for* the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians to be ensured;
3. *Calls for* the immediate resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and the timely implementation of the agreements reached;
4. *Decides* to follow closely the situation and to remain seized of the matter.

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Source: United Nations: <http://www.un.org>

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# A Critical Analysis of Security Council Resolution 1073

(October 1, 1996)

The [resolution](#) takes as its basis the letter of the Saudi representative regarding the "action by the Government of Israel to open a [tunnel](#) in the vicinity of [Al Aqsa Mosque](#)". This is in fact a distortion of the situation as the tunnel is an archeological site which has nothing to do with the Mosque.

The resolution ignores the letter of Israel's permanent representative, to the UN Secretary General, on this very subject and at the outset constitutes a one-sided approach to the issue.

The resolution mentions the "consequent results" of the tunnel's opening and as such ignores the the campaign of incitement and vilification on the part of the Palestinian Council and several Arab states which engendered the current outbreak of violence.

While the [Security Council](#) expresses its "deep concern" over the deaths of Palestinian civilians and "concern" over the violent clashes between the Israeli Army and the Palestinian Police, nowhere does this resolution express "concern", deep or otherwise, regarding the blatant violation by the Palestinian Police of the [Agreements between Israel and the Palestinians](#). Not only did the Palestinian Police not exercise effective control to prevent violence, there were repeated instances when Palestinian Policemen joined rampaging mobs and fired on Israeli positions with the very weapons that were supposed to be used to keep

order, causing the killing of 15 Israeli soldiers and policemen and the wounding of more than 60.

It should be noted that the violence in the territories was instigated and encouraged in a cynical and calculated manner by the leadership of the Palestinian Council as well as other states in the region. Israel has not, nor will it ever, undertake or countenance any action which would damage the holy sites of any religion in Jerusalem, or in any other locale under its jurisdiction. The members of the Security Council as well as the Palestinian Council are well aware of this. Nevertheless, the resolution is silent about the distortions and incitement which were aimed at Israel in the days prior to the violence in the territories and which set the stage for its outbreak. Furthermore, the resolution does not call upon those who engaged in this dangerous incitement to desist from it in the future.

It must be stated that this resolution is also silent regarding those who actually resorted to violence. The Palestinian Police and Security Services who were armed by virtue of the agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and are charged with keeping order in the areas under Palestinian jurisdiction. Instead they turned these weapons on Israeli soldiers and police, without any provocation, in what can only be described as an horrendous abuse of the trust with which they were invested and the powers which they were granted. None of this finds any expression in the resolution.

One can only, and sadly, conclude from this resolution that the Security Council has sent a message that artificially generated violence achieves political advantage and rewards those who cynically endanger human lives and the cause of peace in the Middle East.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](http://www.israeli-ministry.gov.il/)

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## The Western Wall



When Rome destroyed the [Second Temple](#) in 70 C.E., only one outer wall remained standing. The Romans probably would have destroyed that wall as well, but it must have seemed too insignificant to them; it was not even part of the Temple itself, just an outer wall surrounding the Temple Mount. For the Jews, however, this remnant of what was the most sacred building in the Jewish world quickly became the holiest spot in Jewish life. Throughout the centuries Jews from throughout the world made the difficult pilgrimage to Palestine, and immediately headed for the *Kotel ha-Ma'aravi* (the Western Wall) to thank God. The prayers offered at the *Kotel* were so heartfelt that gentiles began calling the site the "Wailing Wall." This undignified name never won a wide following among traditional

Jews; the term "Wailing Wall" is not used in Hebrew.

The Western Wall was subjected to far worse than semantic indignities. During the more than one thousand years [Jerusalem](#) was under Muslim rule, the Arabs often used the Wall as a garbage dump, so as to humiliate the Jews who visited it.

For nineteen years, from 1948 to 1967, the *Kotel* was under Jordanian rule. Although the Jordanians had signed an [armistice agreement](#) in 1949 guaranteeing Jews the right to visit the Wall, not one Israeli Jew was ever permitted to do so. One of the first to reach the *Kotel* in the 1967 [Six-Day War](#) was Israeli Defense Minister [Moshe Dayan](#), who helped revive a traditional Jewish custom by inserting a written petition into its cracks. It was later revealed that Dayan's prayer was that a lasting peace "descend upon the House of Israel."

The custom of inserting written prayers into the *Kotel's* cracks is so widespread that some American-Jewish newspapers carry advertisements for services that insert such prayers on behalf of sick Jews. The mystical qualities associated with the *Kotel* are underscored in a popular Israeli song, a refrain of which runs: "There are people with hearts of stone, and stones with hearts of people." A rabbi in Jerusalem once told me that the Hebrew expression "The walls have ears" was originally said about the Western Wall.

Unfortunately, even a symbol as unifying as the *Kotel* can become a source of controversy in Jewish life. Ultra-Orthodox Jews have long opposed organized women's prayer services at the Wall; prayer services they maintain, may only be conducted by males. On occasion they have violently dispersed such services, throwing chairs and other "missiles" at the praying women. Under intense public pressure however, the right of women to pray collectively at the *Kotel* is gradually being won.

In addition to the large crowds that come to pray at the *Kotel* on Friday evenings, it is also a common gathering place on all Jewish holidays, particularly on the fast of [Tisha Be-Av](#), which commemorates the destruction of both Temples. Today the Wall is a national symbol, and the opening or closing ceremonies of many Jewish events, including secular ones, are conducted there.

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Source: Joseph Telushkin. [Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to](#)

[Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People and Its History](#). NY: William Morrow and Co., 1991. Reprinted by permission of the author. Photo courtesy of Jack Hazut, [J.H.M. Photography](#).

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## Western Wall Images



**July 1, 1910**



**Early 1900's**

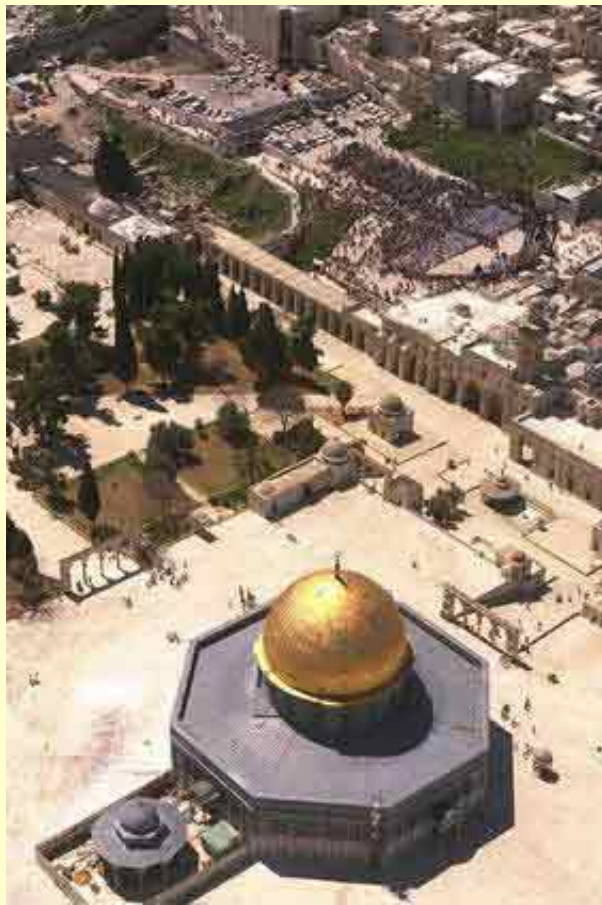


**July 1, 1912**



**July 1, 1934**





**Aerial View of the Temple Mount and Western Wall, May 6, 1995**



**Modern Day**



**Modern Day**

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Sources: Old Wall photos and aerial view courtesy of Israeli Government Press Office  
Kotel photos from early 1900s, [Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division](#)  
Modern Wall photos courtesy of Jack Hazut, [J.H.M. Photography](#)

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### “Western Wall” or “Wailing Wall”?

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Is it "the [Western Wall](#)" or "the Wailing Wall"? Jews nowadays make a point of saying "Western"; non-Jews say both; and the question, which has hitherto seemed a semantic one tinged with religious and national overtones, has now become part of the wrangling over [President Clinton's proposed Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement](#). In the words of the Israeli political and military analyst Ze'ev Schiff, writing in the Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz*:

"What is the length of the Western Wall? Is it confined to the wall facing the space traditionally used by Jews for [prayer](#), which is only 58 meters, or does it include the entire western retaining wall of the [Temple Mount](#)? The Palestinians demand that any diplomatic settlement adhere to the shorter length, known as "the Wailing Wall." Israel insists on "the Western Wall"...whose length is 485 meters.

Let us try to shed some philological light on the matter.

There is no doubt that the Hebrew term *ha-kotel ha-ma'aravi* or "Western Wall" is far older than "Wailing Wall." Thus, for instance, in *Shemot Rabba*, a [midrashic](#) collection of exegeses on the book of [Exodus](#) from the seventh or eighth century C.E., we find the saying attributed to Rabbi Acha (himself a fourth-century scholar) that, even after the destruction of the [Temple](#), "the [Shekhinah](#) [God's presence in the world] never leaves the Western Wall."

There is some doubt, though, whether Rabbi Acha was actually referring



to today's Western Wall rather than to the ruined west wall of the Temple building itself, since there is no mention by any similarly early source of the custom of praying or mourning at today's wall. Indeed, in the early centuries after the destruction of the Temple, Jews were prohibited by the [Roman](#) authorities from entering the city of [Jerusalem](#) at all, and the customary place for mourning the Temple was the [Mount of Olives](#), which overlooks the Temple Mount from the east. A description of this rite is given by the fourth-century Church Father Jerome, who observed Jews on the Mount of Olives on the [Ninth of Av](#), the day of mourning for the Temple, wailing and lamenting while they looked down on its ruins. The earliest clear use of *ha-kotel ha-ma'aravi* in the sense of today's "Western Wall" is by the 11th-century Italian Hebrew poet Ahima'az ben Paltiel. This, too, though, may predate the actual use of the wall by Jews for prayer, since it is not until the 16th century that we hear of the wall being used for that purpose

The English term "Wailing Wall" or its equivalent in other languages dates from much later. In fact despite its hoary sound, "Wailing Wall" is a strictly 20th-century English usage introduced by the British after their conquest of Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917. In the 19th century, when European travelers first began visiting Palestine in sufficient numbers to notice the Jews there at all, the Western Wall was commonly referred to as "the Wailing Place," as in the following passage from Samuel Manning's "Those Holy Fields" (1873):

A little further along the western [retaining] wall we come to the Wailing-place of the Jews.... Here the Jews assemble every Friday to mourn over their fallen state.... Some press their lips against crevices in the masonry as though imploring an answer from some unseen presence within, others utter loud cries of anguish.

The "Wailing-place" was a translation of El-Mabka, or "the Place of Weeping," the traditional Arabic term for the wall. Within a short time after the commencement of the British Mandate, however, "Wailing Wall" became the standard English term, nor did Jews have any compunctions about using it. Only after the [Six-Day War](#) in 1967 did it become *de rigueur* in Jewish circles to say "Western Wall"—a reflection of the feeling, first expressed by official Israeli usage and then spreading to the Diaspora, that, with the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, there was no longer anything to wail about. Henceforward, the wall should be a place of celebration.

This happened so quickly that it is difficult to find a Jewish book written after 1967 in which the term "Wailing Wall" occurs. Gradually, the non-Jewish world began to fall in line, so that "Western Wall" predominates in contemporary non-Jewish usage too, though "Wailing Wall" can still be found there. [Muslims](#), for their part, use neither term, "El-Mabka" having fallen out of favor in the 1920s with growing Arab-Jewish tensions over rights at the wall. The Palestinians then began calling it "El-Burak," after the name of [Mohammed's](#) horse that was supposedly tethered there on the prophet's legendary night ride to Jerusalem and heaven.

But in Hebrew it has always been *ha-kotel ha-ma'aravi*, at least for the last thousand years. Or rather, this is its full form, which Israelis rarely use in ordinary conversation. In Israel one generally hears no more than *ha-kotel*, "the Wall," the subject being clear, since the everyday Hebrew word for "wall" is *kir* and *kotel* is used only in special idioms. Perhaps as part of his carefully prepared package of compromises, Mr. Clinton could prevail upon both sides to do the same and drop both "Wailing" and "Western."

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Source: PHILOLOGOS column by Hillel Halkin from the [Forward](#), (January 12, 2001).

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## The Western Wall and its Tunnels

From the times of King Solomon to the return from the Babylonian exile and the Hasmonean period (tenth to first centuries BCE), the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was a relatively small platform built on top of Mount Moriah and its highest point was the Stone of Foundation; this was the site of the [Temple](#). King Herod's greatest building project was to double the area of the Temple Mount by incorporating part of the hill to the northwest (which had to be leveled and on which he built the Antonia Fortress) and by filling up parts of the surrounding valleys. Herod transformed the Second Temple into an edifice of splendor and surrounded the Temple Mount on its four sides with massive retaining walls. The walls, founded on bedrock, were built of large ashlar stones with beautifully dressed margins. Each course was set back about 2 - 3 cm. from the course below it; the stones weigh some five tons each, the corner blocks tens of tons.

The Temple Mount, the buildings and the Temple itself were completely destroyed by the Roman legions in 70 CE. The lower part of the Temple Mount walls was preserved and its remains are still standing.

Long sections of the southern wall of the Temple Mount and its southwestern corner were exposed during the 1970s, furnishing a comprehensive picture of the monumental Herodian walls surrounding the Temple Mount and the vast, planned areas of public construction outside of them.

The western wall of the Temple Mount, inside today's Old City of Jerusalem, is the longest — 485 m. Most of its construction features, including the foundations and the four gates once located in it, are now known. Not far from the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount, the

remains of “Robinson's Arch” can be seen projecting from the wall. This arch once supported a monumental staircase which gave access to the Temple Mount from the main street below it.

Best known of the remaining Herodian Temple Mount constructions is the traditional Jewish prayer area of the Western Wall (the “Wailing Wall”) which has stood exposed, above ground level, for two thousand years. The [Six-Day War](#) provided an opportunity to explore along the continuation of the Western Wall from the prayer plaza northwards.

Entering a tunnel at the prayer plaza, one turns northwards into a medieval complex of subterranean vaulted spaces and a long corridor with rooms on either side. Incorporated into this complex is a Roman and medieval structure of vaults, built of large dressed limestone. It includes an earlier Herodian room, constructed of well-dressed stones, with double openings and walls decorated with protruding pilasters. Ch. Warren, who surveyed the area in the 19th century, erroneously named it the “Masonic Hall.”

The vaulted complex ends at Wilson's Arch, named after the explorer who discovered it in the middle of the 19th century. The arch, supported by the Western Wall, was 12.8 m. wide and stood high above the present-day ground level. Josephus Flavius mentions a bridge which connected the Temple Mount with the Upper City to the west during the Second Temple period. This bridge once carried water via a conduit from Solomon's Pools; it was destroyed during the Jewish Revolt against Rome (66-70 CE) and rebuilt during the early Islamic period.

Beyond Wilson's Arch, a large cruciform hall, part of a Mamluk period construction, was cleared of debris and a large water cistern was removed, revealing the Herodian Western Wall in its full glory.

From this point, along the outer face of the Herodian western wall of the Temple Mount, a long narrow tunnel was dug slowly and with much care under the supervision of archeologists. As work progressed under the buildings of the present Old City, the tunnel was systematically reinforced with concrete supports. A stretch of the western wall — 300 m. long — was revealed in pristine condition, exactly as constructed by Herod.

At the end of this man-made tunnel, a 20 m. long section of a paved road and an earlier, rock-cut Hasmonean aqueduct leading to the Temple Mount were uncovered. Today one can proceed along it to a public

reservoir and from there, a short new tunnel leads outside to the Via Dolorosa in the Muslim Quarter.

The project of the Western Wall Tunnels was supervised by archeologists M. Ben-Dov and later by D. Bahat on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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# **The Western Wall Tunnels: An Archaeological Appraisal**

**By Aren M. Maeir, Archaeologist  
Israel Antiquities Authority**

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is a site with a long history of ritual importance, commencing with the Iron Age (10th cent. BCE) when King Solomon built a temple on this site. Throughout the following periods, the mount was used, almost continually, as the site of three Jewish temples (Solomon, Neherm'ah, Herod), a pagan temple (Roman Period), as the site of Islamic mosques and holy place (from 8th cent. CE onwards), and for a short period as a Christian site (during the Crusader period). For centuries, the site has been of utmost religious importance, in particular to the Jews and Moslems, and to a lesser extent to the Christians. Both the Temple Mount itself and its immediate surroundings contain numerous finds of great archaeological and historical importance.

Since the Roman period (2nd CE), Jews did not have access to the Temple Mount. In light of this, the Western Wall, the closest spot to which they could approach the original position of the destroyed Jewish temples, became one of the most important places of worship for the Jews. The Western Wall is but one of the four monumental enclosure walls surrounding the Temple Mount, which were originally built in the 1st BCE - 1st CE by Herod the Great, King of Judea. At that time, Herod extensively expanded the Temple Mount, turning it into one of the most majestic religious sites in the Roman East. Though the Temple Mount underwent numerous destructions and rebuildings since the Herodian period, the course of the four enclosure walls (including the Western-Wall) has basically gone unchanged.



The Western Wall Tunnels project commenced following the Six-Day War, as an effort to expose additional portions of this wall, in order to learn more about both the wall itself and the various structures in its vicinity of various periods. Till then, only a small portion of the wall had been exposed.

Since most of the wall was blocked by buildings which were in contemporary use, the wall in its entirety could not be exposed. Instead, a man-made tunnel was excavated along the entire length of the west wall, underneath these buildings. Care was taken to insure structural support of the buildings above. It should be stressed that throughout all the work in this project, the tunnel was excavated outside of the Temple Mount itself. Needless to say, the tunnel was never in the vicinity of the mosques on the Temple Mount.

The tunnel enabled exposure of a small, though continuous section of the wall (a total length of ca. 500 m.), revealing important facts regarding methods of construction, the dating of various activities in the vicinity of the Temple Mount, not to mention various archaeological finds along the way. In effect, this project offered a manner to procure archaeological information which would have been impossible to attain through other methods. Noteworthy were finds from the Herodian period (streets, monumental masonry), sections of reconstruction of the Western Wall dated most probably to the Umayyad period and various structures dating to the Ayyubid and Mamluke periods constructed to support buildings in the vicinity of the Temple Mount. Though in fact various explorers had reached some of the remains that had been exposed in the tunnel, none had achieved quite such a comprehensive and robust picture as attained in the present project.

At the very northern portion of the Western Wall, an additional find was uncovered. This was the remains of a water channel which originally supplied water to the Temple Mount, though it was canceled out by the Herodian building. The exact source of the channel is unknown, though it passes through an underground pool known as the "Stroutioun Pool". The water channel was tentatively dated to the Hasmonean period (2nd-1st cent. BCE), and was dubbed the "Hasmonean Channel". The channel had already been reported in the 19th cent. CE by the British explorer Warren.

The current northern exit was made by tunneling in the bedrock next to the Stroutioun Pool, exiting on the Via Dolorosa, a public street. Needless to say, this tunneling as well was not conducted under or on the Temple Mount itself, and it is situated some 200-300 meters away from the

Mosques on the Temple Mount. In other words, there was and is no archaeological or structural damage to the various historic Islamic edifices on or around the Temple Mount.

In summary, the Western Wall tunnels project has been an important avenue for exposing information relating to numerous periods in the history of the city of Jerusalem, information which otherwise would be near-impossible to attain. Close attention was paid throughout the entire project (in conjunction with a team of engineers, architects and conservators) that these activities would not damage buildings above and in the immediate vicinity of the tunnels. It should be stressed that none of these activities were under the Temple Mount itself and they did not in any manner endanger the various religious, historical and archaeological edifices on the Temple Mount.

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Source: [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).

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## Area G

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"David occupied the stronghold and renamed it the [City of David](#); [David](#) also fortified the surrounding area, from the Millo inward" ([2 Samuel 5:9](#)).

This area, which was excavated from 1978 to 1985 by an archaeological mission led by the late Professor Yigal Shiloh, unearthed impressive remnants of a large number of buildings, mainly from the [First Temple](#) period. The most prominent feature is a stepped structure made of stone which probably served as a support for the fortress of [David](#) and the kings of [Judah](#). The "miloh" (from Hebrew: to fill) that [David](#) built may have been a group of stone walls between which was an infill of earth and stones, and which formed the terraces upon which the houses of the fortress-city were built. Toward the end of the [First Temple](#) period dwellings were built within and upon the stone foundation; these were destroyed when the [Babylonians](#) captured and razed [Jerusalem](#) in 586 [BCE](#).

One of these dwellings, known as the "House of Ahiel", was reconstructed after the completion of the excavations. The site's eastern area yielded a large and fascinating collection of "bullae" (seal impressions made of clay) which were apparently used by officials of the kingdom. Some believe that it was to here, the Fortress of Zion, that [David](#) brought the [Ark of the Covenant](#) from Kiryat Ya'arim and thus made [Jerusalem](#) a political and religious capital.

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Source: [The Jerusalem Mosaic](#). [Copyright](#) 1995 Hebrew University of Jerusalem -- All Rights Reserved.

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# Biblical Jerusalem: From Canaanite City to Israelite Capital

## Canaanite Artifacts

The long history of Jerusalem began well before it was captured by King David and made into the Capital of the People of Israel 3,000 years ago. Archeological findings indicate the existence of a settlement in Jerusalem in the 3rd millenium BCE. The first mention of the city in historic sources begins in the 2nd millenium BCE.

The Ma'arot Writings, written in hieroglyphics, were meant to put a curse on the enemies of Egypt. They were written in the 18th and 19th centuries B.C., on small statues of prisoners or on bowls. The name "*Rashlemum*" (Jerusalem) is mentioned on some of them. The verse in *Genesis* 11;18 "*and Malchi-Tzedek King of **Salem** brought forth bread and wine and he is priest to the Almighty God above,*" refers to that same period, which is known in the Bible as the period of the Patriarchs.

In the middle of the 2nd millenium B.C.E. the King of Egypt and his advisors carried on a volumous correspondence with the governors of the cities in the Land of Israel that were under Egyptian suzerainty. There was antagonism among these governors, and in their letters, pictured on the right, they complain about each other, and request help (one chariot or ten soldiers), to defeat their enemies, whom they describe, of course, as the enemies of the king. The letters were written in cuneiform, in the Akkadian language (which was the international language then, much as English is today), and some of them were found in Egypt, in the archive of the capital city, El-Amarna. Six of the letters found were written by the governor of Jerusalem ("*Ershalem*").

## A Bird's Eye View

The location of the ancient Canaanite city was chosen specifically for its natural protective qualities. The hill, on which early Jerusalem was built, has natural fortifications from three directions: the deep Kidron valley from the east, the "HaGai" (Tyropoeon) valley from the west, and the lowland where they meet in the south. The only side that isn't naturally protected is the north. This has been a problem that has accompanied ancient Jerusalem throughout its history, which has even been mentioned in biblical passages, such as the words of the prophet Jeremiah "...and from the north shall come the evil" (Jeremiah 1;14).

## The Gihon Spring

In a land as dry as the Land of Israel, the main consideration in determining the location of a city or village, is its proximity to the nearest water source. The only permanent water source of ancient Jerusalem was the Gihon Spring. Its name is derived from the fact that it doesn't flow steadily, but rather in random eruptions with lapses in between them (*Giha* in Hebrew means eruption).

## The City of David

The spring flows out of the ground from the foot of the hill, in the bed of the Kidron brook. The city was built on the top of the hill and on its slopes. This created a problem of access to water at times of war.

The city wall was built in the middle of the slope, which was the best location for purposes of defense. However, the spring remained outside the city defenses. In times of peace this fact was of little importance, but if the city was under siege, a serious threat of being cut off from the sole water supply arises.

## Jebusite Fortification

During the 1960's the British archeologist Kathleen Kenyon excavated the eastern slope of the city's hill. She succeeded in exposing, at the middle of the slope, the remains of the solid Jebusite defense wall that King David had to overcome in his conquest of Jerusalem.



## Warren's Shaft

From the Biblical story of the capture of Jerusalem by King David, it is implied that the battle was won with the help of a stratagem connected with something called the "*tsinor*" (*Samuel II*, 5; 8). This word appears only here, its meaning is not fully known, and it has been translated as gutter or tunnel.

In the Jebusite city there was a method to access the Gihon spring water source, which is outside the wall, from *within* the city. A diagonal tunnel was hewn in the bedrock (apparently, along the line of a natural crack), and at its end a deep horizontal shaft was dug. From the top of the horizontal shaft, water jugs were lowered to the spring flowing below. Thus, access to the spring was hidden from the enemy outside the city. Perhaps this shaft is the "*tsinor*" through which King David's men climbed and penetrated the city as is mentioned in the Bible. The shaft was named after the British researcher Charles Warren who discovered it in the 19th century, . (Hezekiah's tunnel is from a later period).

## Israelite Wall

*And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built a round about from Millo and inward." (Samuel II, 5:9).*

After conquering the city, King David began its fortification. The wall on the east side of the city, which remained in the same place until the destruction of the Solomon's Temple, was built on top of the Jebusite wall on exactly the same course. Archeological research has shown that was repaired many times over the years. The Millo ("fullness") is perhaps the filling that David's men had to pour on the steep slope in order to make it appropriate for building houses.

## Israelite Tribes

Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish People for 3000 years, is located at the center of the Land of Israel, at the intersection of a number of ancient commerce routes. In Jerusalem, the North-South hilltop route intersects the main trade routes running from east to west.

Jerusalem was chosen by King David to be the capital mainly because the city, although part of the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, had not yet

been conquered by the Israelites, and was not tied specifically to any of the twelve tribes.

For David, this was of great significance, because this enabled him to conquer the city with royal forces, and, as was customary at the time, retain it as royal property. He could use Jerusalem as the symbol for a united Israel. In order to emphasize the uniqueness and importance of Jerusalem, David brought the Holy Ark of the Covenant there and turned the city into the religious center of the People of Israel. He bought the threshing floor of Aravna the Jebusite and built an altar there to the Lord (*Samuel II* 24;21-25). Being a warrior, he was not permitted to build the Holy Temple himself. Therefore, he designated Solomon, his son and heir, to build the Temple after his passing.

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### Biblical Jerusalem: The Growth of Judean Jerusalem

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Over time, the Judean capital city of Jerusalem grew and expanded well beyond the small boundaries of the City of David. At first, the Temple Mount was an addition to the city and was, apparently, fortified in some way (which still remains unknown). Later, the process of expansion "beyond the walls" occurred after the population continued to increase.

The Bible mentions the names of residential neighborhoods outside the City of David, such as *Mishneh* (*Kings II* 22;14) and *Makhtesh* (*Zephania* 1;11). The main growth in population occurred around 721 C.E., when the Northern Israelite kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria and the refugees fled to the Southern Israelite kingdom of Judea; and in 701 C.E., when King Sennacherib of Assyria led a military campaign, conquering the coastal cities of the Land of Israel.

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## Biblical Jerusalem: Solomon's Temple

Not a single archeological remnant has been found of the Temple of Solomon; therefore, to describe it, we have to rely on two other sources. The primary source is the Bible, which supplies us with accurate descriptions and measurements (*Kings I* 6; 7, 14-15). The second source is archeological research from discoveries of that same time period found in the region.

We can assume that the architectural style of the edifice was drawn from regional influences. In fact, there is even an allusion to that in the Bible: *"And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram of Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill to work all works in brass, and he came to King Solomon, and wrought all his work"* (*Kings I* 7;13-14).

**Tel Ta'inat** is a site in the north of Syria, where a long temple, with three internal divisions — similar to the "Courtyard," the "Temple" and the "Sanctuary" in the Temple of Solomon, was unearthed (*Kings I* 6;2-3,16). The Tel-Ta'inat site is from a slightly later time period than the Temple of Solomon.

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## The Broad Wall



In the early 1970s an archaeological mission headed by Professor Nahman Avigad unearthed part of the city wall from the period of [King Hezekiah](#) (end of the 8th century BCE). Evidently the city's population had increased even before Hezekiah ascended the throne, and [Jerusalem](#) expanded to the slopes of Mount Zion. When the Assyrian army approached, the king decided to fortify the city and wall in the newly built areas. The archaeological dig found that houses which had stood on the planned route of the wall were demolished and their stones used to reinforce the wall. According to [Isaiah \(22:9-10\)](#): "And you took note of the many breaches in the [City of David](#)... and you counted the houses of Jerusalem and pulled houses down to fortify the wall." The spare description conveys extraordinarily well the atmosphere of urgency and drama that

accompanied the building of the wall. It was a vast project which, together with the hewing of the water.

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## The Citadel of Jerusalem

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The citadel of [Jerusalem](#), known as the "Tower of David," has been a landmark of the city since ancient times. The citadel is located on the western side of the [Old City](#), just south of the Jaffa Gate. Its location was chosen for topographic reasons – this is the highest point of the southwestern hill of [Jerusalem](#), higher than any other point in the ancient city, including the Temple Mount. A series of fortifications built here in the course of more than twenty centuries, protected [Jerusalem](#) from the west and also overlooked and controlled the entire city.

A first archeological survey of the citadel, and excavations, were conducted between 1934 and 1947. Renewed excavations were undertaken after the reunification of the city, between the years 1968 and 1988, preparing the opening of the site to visitors.

Every period has left its mark and has been identified in the assemblage of architectural remains. In the citadel's foundations are buried the remains of Jerusalem's fortifications from the end of the monarchic period (8th to 6th centuries BCE) through the early Arab period (seventh to eleventh centuries). The outline of the citadel known today is from the [Crusader](#) period; the citadel itself was built in the mid-16th century by the [Ottoman](#) sultan [Suleiman the Magnificent](#), and incorporates the remains of earlier citadels dating from Ayyubid and [Mamluk](#) times.

The Citadel is protected by a high wall and large towers, and it is surrounded by a wide, deep moat, part of which was blocked in modern times. The entrance is from the east, via an outer gate, a bridge over the moat and a fortified inner gate house.

## The Early Fortification

In the citadel's courtyard, excavations have revealed the remains of fortifications dating from the late monarchic period to the [Hellenistic](#) and [Roman](#) periods. Here was the northwestern corner of the First Wall which is described in great detail by the contemporary Jewish historian [Josephus Flavius](#). According to him, the First Wall extended from here towards the [Temple Mount](#) to the east and also to the south, surrounding Mount Zion and then joining the southern wall of the [City of David](#). (War V,4,2) Remains of this wall and of three large towers are preserved to an impressive height of over 7 m. in the citadel courtyard. Several construction phases belonging to different periods can be observed, distinguishable by differences in the masonry and in the method of laying the stones.

## The Monarchic Period

The wall was first built in this area by [Hezekiah](#), king of Judah, at the end of the 8th century BCE. A detailed description of its construction on the eve of the [Assyrian](#) invasion of Judah, is in the Bible: He [Hezekiah] set to work resolutely and built up all the wall that was broken down and raised towers upon it, and outside it he built another wall. (2 Chron. 32:5) The remains of that incredibly wide wall (ca. 7 m.!), built of large boulders, were uncovered at great depth on the bedrock of the hill. This mighty fortification protected a new residential quarter built on the southwestern hill of [Jerusalem](#) which, until that time, comprised only the City of David and the Temple on Mt. Moriah. The wall was damaged in 587/6 BCE, when [Jerusalem](#) was conquered by the Babylonians.

## The Second Temple Period

After some 300 years, the First Wall was restored by the [Hasmonean](#) rulers, who invested considerable effort in increasing the area of [Jerusalem](#) and strengthening its fortifications. At the Citadel, a 4 m. thick wall with two mighty towers, dating from this period, was uncovered. It was constructed in two phases: in the first, rectangular ashlar were laid in header fashion, a [Hellenistic](#) building style; in the second phase, ashlar with dressed margins and protruding central boss on the outer faces, were laid in alternating courses of headers and stretchers.

At the end of the 1st century BCE, King Herod improved the fortifications in this area and added three huge towers to the First Wall. A precise description, including the measurements of these towers is found in the writings of Josephus Flavius. The towers, which rose high over the city, were named Phasaël (after Herod's brother), Hippicus (after Herod's friend) and Mariamne (after Herod's Hasmonean wife). They were built to protect the large royal palace south of them, which apparently included the area of the present day citadel and part of the Armenian Quarter. Remains of the podium built inside the First Wall to support the palace were found during excavation of the Citadel. It consists of a grid of retaining walls which held earth fill, thus artificially raising the ground level by some 5 m.

One of the towers built by Herod has survived to the present day. This is the so-called Tower of David which is incorporated into the fortifications of the eastern side of the present Citadel. It should be noted that the traditional name Tower of David, said to be the result of the incorrect identification of this structure by Christian pilgrims in the [Byzantine](#) period, has in fact much earlier origins: Josephus refers to the southwestern hill of [Jerusalem](#) of that period as the "Citadel of King David." (War V,3,1)

The dimensions of the Tower of David are approximately 22 x 18 m., consisting of 16 courses of large ashlar stones weighing over a ton each. They have trimmed margins and a flat central boss, carefully laid without gaps, and the interior of the tower is filled with large ashlars. The Tower of David is one of the most impressive examples of royal construction of the Second Temple period in [Jerusalem](#). It stands to this day to a height of 20 m.!

The three towers built by Herod and the other fortifications created a powerful, well protected fortress. Thence the decisive strategic role it played in the [First Jewish Rebellion](#) against Rome (66-70 CE) which ended with the siege of the city, its conquest and destruction. This is attested to in another tower, located in the southern part of the citadel, which was built in the 1st century CE and was destroyed during the rebellion: a thick layer of debris, including stones, plaster, and charred wooden roofing beams, was uncovered.

## The Roman Period

After the destruction of [Jerusalem](#) in 70 CE, the [Romans](#) established a camp to quarter the Tenth Legion on the southwestern hill of the city. It

was protected by the three towers built by Herod, which the Roman commander Titus had ordered to be left intact. (Josephus, War VII,1,1) Remains of this Roman Legion camp were uncovered in the courtyard of the Citadel; they include clay water pipe sections bearing seal impressions reading "L·X·F," for Legio X Fretensis, the full name of the Tenth Legion.

## The Byzantine Period

During the [Byzantine](#) period, the fortifications of the citadel, including the Tower of David, were restored. Nearby, monks built monasteries and other religious institutions, as reported by several contemporary Christian travelers. Only fragmentary remains of fortifications, walls, cisterns and a lintel engraved with a cross, date to this period.

## The Early Arab Period

In the 8th century, during the period of Arab rule over [Jerusalem](#), a new citadel was established. Among its remains are a rounded corner tower measuring 10 m. in diameter, from which 4-m. thick walls extend to the north and to the west. The precise plan of this citadel is not known, as severe damage was caused when the [Crusaders](#) built their citadel.

## The Crusader Period

The [Crusader](#) citadel, built in the 12th century, was innovative and extended northward and westward, beyond the ancient city wall. The early city wall became an inner terrace wall in the courtyard, which was buried under some 10 m. of debris, protecting and preserving it until its exposure during the archeological excavations.

Today, for the first time in its long history, the citadel is no longer used for military purposes. Instead, it functions as the museum of the history of [Jerusalem](#). Presented in its various towers are exhibits tracing 5,000 years of the city's history. In the courtyard, remains of the First Wall and its towers, of the Second Temple period and of the fortification from the [Byzantine](#) and early Arab periods, have been preserved and serve as a veritable guidebook to the long history of Jerusalem's fortifications on the southwestern hill.

Excavations: 1968-1969 – R. Amiran and A. Eitan on behalf of the Israel Museum, the Israel Exploration Society and the Hebrew University of

Jerusalem; 1976-1980 – Hillel Geva on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Exploration Society; 1980-1988 – R. Sivan and G. Solar on behalf of the Tower of David Museum and the Department of Antiquities and Museums (today, the Israel Antiquities Authority).

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Jerusalem — The City of David

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The City of David, [Jerusalem](#) of ancient times, was located on a narrow ridge south of the present-day [Old City](#). On the east it borders the deep Kidron Valley where the Gihon Spring, the city's water source, is located.

The archeological exploration of the City of David began in the middle of the 19th century and continues to this day. It has fired the imagination of many scholars from different nations and backgrounds who came to excavate in Jerusalem. The latest excavations were carried out between 1978 and 1985 and there is an ongoing process of updating and revising previous interpretations.

### Early Settlement

The earliest permanent settlement uncovered is represented by several rectangular buildings with benches along their interior walls. These buildings, dated to the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium [BCE](#)) are typical of Canaanite urban settlements at that time.

During the Middle Bronze Age, as early as the 18th century BCE, a massive wall was built around the city, of which a 30 m. long section has been exposed above the Kidron Valley. Within this wall buildings were excavated, indicative of city life during that period.

Finds of the Late Bronze Age (1600 - 1200 BCE) are few and disappointing. This is in marked contrast to the common view of Jerusalem as an important Canaanite urban center, based on mention of the king of the city of Jerusalem in the 14th century BCE archive found at



Tel el-Amarna in Egypt. In Joshua 10, the defeat of Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, who led a coalition of five Amorite kings, is described. Defeat but not conquest: Jerusalem is later mentioned as a Jebusite city (the Amorite and Jebusite peoples were part of the collectively known "Canaanites") in Judges 19:10-12.

During the 13th-12th centuries BCE structural operations changed the topography of the upper part of the city: interlocking and intersecting stone walls created terraces which provided an artificial surface, apparently the podium of the citadel of the Canaanite-Jebusite city of Jerusalem.

During the excavations, [Warren's Shaft](#) (named for Ch. Warren, an English archeologist who pioneered systematic excavations in Jerusalem between 1864-67), the earliest water system of the City of David was cleared. This underground system, constructed at the end of the second millennium BCE, enabled the citizens of Jerusalem to draw water from the Gihon spring without leaving the fortified walls of their city. A recent geological survey has shown that Warren's Shaft incorporates a number of geological features which give credibility to the assumption that it was functioning even before David's conquest of Jerusalem and may be the tzinnor (Hebrew for pipe or conduit) mentioned in [2 Samuel 5:8](#).

## The Monarchic Period

A 10th century [BCE](#) massive retaining structure for a monumental building (capping earlier Jebusite terraces), is assumed to be part of the fortress of Zion, residence of [King David](#). ([2 Samuel 5:7-9](#))

In the 8th century BCE Jerusalem expanded; during the reign of [King Hezekiah](#) the hill to the west of the city of David was encompassed within its walls. The course of the strengthened eastern wall of the city was traced for approximately 120 m., virtually along the course of its Bronze Age predecessor and in places incorporating remnants of it. Within the walls, buildings were separated by alleyways and drainage channels emptying into the Kidron Valley via a small opening in the wall. Remains of several structures dating to this time were also revealed outside the city walls, evidence that the city was densely populated. It would appear that these quarters were abandoned during the [Assyrian](#) siege of 701 BCE described in the biblical narrative. ([2 Kings 18-19](#))

During the 8th and 7th centuries BCE Jerusalem enjoyed a period of prosperity. Parts of prominent structures have been uncovered, attesting to this as well as to the intensity of the [Babylonian](#) destruction in 587-6 BCE.

The Ashlar House, a large structure on the southeastern slope of the city, was built of huge dressed stones and is assumed to have been a public building. Another house, containing the "burnt room," named after the thick layer of charred debris covering its floor, is also from this period.

The House of Ahi'el, on the northeastern slope, is a typical four-roomed Israelite dwelling of this time. The name derives from the Hebrew inscription on a pottery fragment found in the house, which includes this personal name. The house had an external stone staircase leading to a second story. In a small storage room over fifty restorable jars were found and in another small room a limestone toilet seat was embedded in the plaster floor, with a cesspit beneath it.

The *Bullae* House, east of the House of Ahi'el, is so named for a collection of almost 50 clay sealings (*bullae*) with Hebrew lettering found there. The floor of this house, only partly excavated, was covered by a thick charred destruction layer containing the *bullae* as well as pottery vessels, arrowheads and limestone cult stands, all of which attest to the character of the house as a public building. The finds are typical of the final stage of the Iron Age and the *bullae* found in this context clearly date to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587-6 BCE. The *bullae*, made of fingernail-sized lumps of soft clay shaped as flat disks, were affixed to a string binding a papyrus document and then stamped with a seal. To open and read the document, the bulla sealing had to be broken in order to separate it from the string. The conflagration that destroyed the house and burnt the documents stored in it also fired the clay of the *bullae*, thus preserving them in very good condition - fully legible. They bear dozens of Hebrew personal names, two of them belonging to personages known from the Bible. One is Gemaryahu son of Shafan, a high official at the court of King Jehoiakim of Judah who reigned on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians:

*Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemaryahu the son of Shafan the scribe, in the upper court at the entrance of the new Gate of the Lord's House in the hearing of all the people. ([Jeremiah 36:10](#); see also 11-12, 25)*

The second biblical personage is Azaryahu son of Hilkiyahu, a member of the family of high priests who officiated at the end of the First Temple period. ([1 Chronicles 9:10](#))

The *bullae* from the City of David, uncovered in controlled excavation in clear stratigraphic context and supported by historical evidence, are one of the most important discoveries ever made in Jerusalem.

The massive destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians is apparent both in the layers of charred remains and in the thick layer of rubble from collapsed buildings found on the eastern slope of the City of David. This vivid archeological evidence sheds light on the biblical description of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587-6 BCE. ([2 Kings 25:8-10](#); [Jeremiah 39:8](#); [2 Chronicles 36:18-19](#))

The City of David was resettled by the Jews exiled to Babylon who returned during the Persian period (6th century BCE). The new wall built by Nehemiah did not follow the line of the old wall, but for the first time was built atop the northeastern slope of the City of David.

During the [Hellenistic](#) and [Roman](#) periods, the city's center shifted to the western hill. By medieval times, the southern wall of Jerusalem was built along the line of the present Old City wall. As a result, the City of David, the site of biblical Jerusalem, remained uninhabited outside the present Old City walls.

The City of David excavations were conducted under the direction of Y. Shiloh on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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### The Church of the Holy Sepulcher



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*"At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden, a new tomb... and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there." ([John](#) 19:41-42)*

Constantine the Great was the first Roman emperor to adopt Christianity; he made it the official religion of the [Roman Empire](#). Constantine started his career as ruler of the western region of the Roman empire (306); after defeating his three co-regents, he emerged in 324 as sole emperor, retaining unrivaled power until his death in 337. He made [Byzantium](#) his capital, rebuilt it and renamed it Constantinople.

In 326, involved with Christianity and ecclesiastical controversy, he

called a meeting of bishops of all the parts of the empire, including Macarius, Bishop of Aelia Capitolina, as [Jerusalem](#) was still called. The emperor's mother, Queen Helena, who had converted to Christianity, was much impressed with the bishop's tale of the sad neglect of the sites hallowed by the life and death of Jesus and, with her son's blessings, authority and funds, left to visit the Holy Land.

In Jerusalem she identified the place of crucifixion (the rock held to be Golgotha) and the nearby tomb known as Anastasis (Greek for resurrection). The emperor decided to build an appropriate shrine on the site, which was then occupied by a 2nd-century Roman temple and shrine that, according to local tradition, was built over the place where Jesus had been crucified and buried. When the Roman buildings were demolished, a series of rock-cut tombs was discovered. One of the tombs was identified as that of Joseph of Arimathea. The sloping bedrock was cut away around this tomb, leaving a freestanding shell (at the site of the present Edicule).

Little remains of the original Byzantine structure, which was burned and looted by the Persians in 614, partially rebuilt by the Patriarch Modestos, damaged by earthquake in 808, and destroyed in 1009 by order of the Fatamid Caliph al-Hakim. A portion was rebuilt again by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Monomachus in 1048, but most of the present building is the result of 12th-century (1144 to be precise) Crusader reconstruction as well as later renovations (the most recent work of restoration and preservation began in 1959 and is not yet completed) made after several centuries during which the church fell into disrepair. The present building encompasses half the area of the original Byzantine church, and only the Rotunda replicates the approximate shape and design of the 4th-century original.

In the 1960s, as part of the proposed restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, a comprehensive survey, including excavations beneath the foundations of the present-day church, which largely follows the plan of the Crusader church, was undertaken.

Based on the written sources, architectural evidence and discoveries made during the survey, the plan of the large complex of the original church was reconstructed. It was composed of four distinct elements: The entrance from the main street - the *Cardo* - (today the main market street of the Old City), led to the courtyard (the eastern *atrium*); from there to the basilica (the *martyrion*); to an inner *atrium* (the Holy Garden); and to the westernmost building, the rotunda (the *anastasis*) with the sepulcher.



## The Present-Day Courtyard

This courtyard, outside the present-day Church of the Holy Sepulcher, is partly supported by a large, vaulted cistern. The northern wall of this cistern is very impressive, consisting of large blocks with dressed margins, still standing several meters high. It has been suggested that this early wall served as the retaining wall of the second century Hadrianic raised platform (*podium*). This appears to support Eusebius' statement that the Temple of Venus, which Hadrian erected on the site of Jesus' tomb, stood here before the original church was built.

## The Basilica

Early masonry below the *catholicon* of the Crusader period was exposed during the excavations. This made possible the reconstruction of the original design of the 4th century basilica. The position of the two central rows of columns in the basilica (out of the four rows) may be determined by the remains of their foundations, which can be seen along the northern and southern sides of the chapel of St. Helena. In a small underground space north of this chapel, a massive foundation wall of the early basilica was exposed. On a large, smoothed stone which was incorporated in this wall, a pilgrim to the original church left a drawing of a merchant ship and the Latin inscription: "O Lord, we shall go." Beneath the apse of the present-day *catholicon*, part of the apse that marked the western end of the original church was exposed. Eusebius described this apse as being surrounded by twelve columns, symbolizing the twelve apostles.

## The Rotunda and Sepulcher

The most important element of the complex is the rotunda which contains the sepulcher itself. The sepulcher stands in an elaborate structure within the rotunda, surrounded by columns supporting an ornamented, domed roof.

Some masonry remains were revealed below the floor and around the perimeter of the rotunda. Wherever bedrock was exposed, there were indications of stone-quarrying in earlier periods. The quarrying operation lowered the surface level around the sepulcher, which thus stood well above its surroundings. An architectural survey of the outer wall of the rotunda - 35 m. in diameter and in some sections preserved to a height of



10 m. - shows that it maintains its original 4th century shape. The sepulcher itself is surrounded by a circle of twelve columns - groups of three columns between four pairs of square piers. It is possible that the columns for the 4th century rotunda were removed from their original location on the facade of the Roman temple. Renovation of the piers exposed evidence that the columns had originally been much higher and that the Crusaders cut them in half for use in the 12th century rotunda.

The renovation of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is still in progress, but after generations of neglect, the building has already regained most of its former beauty.

## **Politics of the Church**

Since the Crusades, the precincts and fabric of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher have come into the possession of three major denominations: the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox and the (Latin) Roman Catholic. Other communities - the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox - also possess certain rights and small properties in or about the building. The rights and privileges of all of these communities are protected by the Status Quo of the Holy Places (1852), as guaranteed in Article LXII of the Treaty of Berlin (1878).

Following the earthquake in 1927, the prevailing political authority (as provided by the Status Quo) had to intervene in order to carry out emergency structural repairs. Such intervention has not been necessary since 1959, when the three principal communities established a Common Technical Bureau.

Some issues, however, remain unresolved; one of these is the continuing dispute between the Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox concerning ownership rights in the Chapel of the Ethiopians (on the roof of the Chapel of St. Helena). Since the dispute began, the government (as the prevailing political authority) has chosen not to intervene, in the hope that the two communities will resolve the matter between themselves.

The survey and excavations were conducted by V. Corbo, Ch. Coüasnon, M. Broshi and others, on behalf of the Christian communities which control most of the Holy Sepulcher: the Roman Catholic; the Greek Orthodox; and the Armenian Orthodox.

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# Muslims to Lose Sole Control of Holy Sepulcher Keys

(June 1999)

After 800 years, two Muslim families will soon lose the distinction of being the sole possessors of the key to the 900-year old [Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#) in the Old City of [Jerusalem](#). In the 12th century, Christians from different denominations fought over who should keep the key to the church where their tradition says Jesus was buried and resurrected. To end the fighting, the Arab conqueror Saladin entrusted the key to the Muslim Nuseibeh and Joudeh families.

Now, eight centuries later, the 10-inch metal key is still safeguarded in the house of the Joudeh family. Every morning at dawn, Wajeeh Nuseibeh, who took over the job of doorkeeper from his father 20 years ago, picks up the key and opens the massive wooden church doors. Every night at 8:00 p.m. he returns to shut and lock them.

Muslim control of the key, however, does not mean Muslim control of the Church. Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian Orthodox groups share the main control of the church, while the Ethiopian, Egyptian Copt and Syrian churches still maintain a presence. Christian sects have, for centuries, guarded their corners of the shrine.

The leaders of all denominations united on Sunday June 20, 1999, in their decision to install a new exit door in the church. The door will be opened as a safety measure for the four million pilgrims expected to visit in the year 2000. Currently, the church has only one door, a factor that

contributed to the deaths of dozens of visitors who were trampled to death during a fire in 1840.

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Source: *Florida Today*, June 21, 1999

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## JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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# Four Periods in the History of Jerusalem

By Lili Eylon

The ancient stones of [Jerusalem](#), the capital of Israel, are imbued with millennia of history. In 1000 BCE King David made the city, located in the heart of the country, his capital. Over the centuries, [Jerusalem](#), held sacred by the three major monotheistic religions, has been a city of places of worship, community life and cultural development as well as a focus of conflict. Today, it is a growing metropolis which faces the challenges of modern urban life while preserving its unique historical and spiritual nature.

The interested visitor can view, in [Jerusalem](#), models depicting the city in four periods of its history:

In the [First Temple Period](#) (c. 960-586 BCE); during [King Herod's reign](#) in the first century CE (Second Temple Period, 538 BCE - 70 CE); in the latter part of the 19th century, under [Ottoman rule](#); [present-day Jerusalem](#), planning for the future

## JERUSALEM IN THE FIRST TEMPLE PERIOD

Some 3000 years ago, King David made [Jerusalem](#) his capital. Solomon, his son, expanded the city and built the Temple to God.

The building of this, the [First Temple](#), is reported to have been started in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, and to have taken seven years to complete. As the central place of worship in the country, it was in use for four centuries. Its fame among the nations of the region rested on the

splendor of its outer appearance and its inner appointments, and on the holy ark of the covenant which it housed. The [Temple](#) was located near the royal palace and enjoyed royal patronage. In 586 BCE, it was destroyed by the Babylonians.

What did [Jerusalem](#) look like in the First Temple period? A model of the ancient city, built under the auspices of Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, is located in an unassuming house in the heart of the Old City's Jewish Quarter. Planned as an educational tool to teach the history of [Jerusalem](#), the model is scaled at about 1:250 and covers a surface of 35 square meters. Miniature replicas of stone structures, as well as of the fortified wall, were constructed on the basis of archeological evidence. Archeologist Dan Bahat, an expert on [Jerusalem](#), is the scientific adviser for the model.

A sound and light show is screened several times daily in Hebrew, English, French and Russian; by using special glasses, the viewer embarks on a three-dimensional "tour" of the sites of biblical [Jerusalem](#). Particular emphasis is placed here on the well-planned water systems carved out of rock during the rule of the Kings of Judah. In his trip into the past, the viewer learns about the conquest of [Jerusalem](#) by King David three millennia ago, the construction of the Temple, the cutting of the Siloam Tunnel (to safeguard the city's water supply) and the horrors of the Babylonian siege and conquest in the sixth century BCE.

The [First Temple](#) has not been reconstructed: while detailed descriptions appear in biblical sources, no archeological evidence has been uncovered to date. In the model, therefore, the building is schematically represented by a box.

However, the myth of the Temple's splendor and its treasures persists. At the beginning of the 20th century, Finnish theologian and poet Walter H. Juvelius conceived the idea of digging in the City of David, which is located on a ridge south of the present Old City, and is, in fact, the original site of [Jerusalem](#). By reinterpreting certain biblical passages, Juvelius believed, the treasures of the [First Temple](#) could be found. As fate would have it, he met Captain Montague Parker, a young officer recently released from the British army, and managed to win him over to his plan. Parker took advantage of his social position and family connections to raise a sum of money with which to begin excavations in search of King Solomon's treasures. The investors were promised a large portion of the treasure when it was found. Parker led the expedition that arrived in [Jerusalem](#) in 1909



and began to dig in the City of David and in the Siloam Tunnel, which he believed led to the Temple Mount.

Father Vincent, a prominent [Jerusalem](#) archeologist associated with the Ecole-Biblique, joined the excavations. While other members of the expedition pursued excavation of the canals, the Siloam Tunnel and the other ancient water systems, Vincent documented the findings.

With the assistance of experts brought from Europe, Parker dug through a complex system of canals in his attempt to penetrate the Temple Mount. The work was done under harsh winter conditions, with the constant threat of landslides and the collapse of the canals - and was kept secret for two years (1909-1911).

In the spring of 1911, when Captain Parker realized that the Ottoman authorities would not allow him to continue digging, he bribed some Wakf (Moslem religious) officials, and, together with some of his men, penetrated the Temple Mount and began excavating. He was quickly discovered, and the members of the expedition had to flee the country.

Interest in the affair continued, however, and journalists wondered whether the treasures of the Temple had been discovered and hidden. However, the expedition had in fact not found any of the Temple's treasures.

Exhibited together with the model are Father Vincent's sketches and maps of the water canals, as well as his photographs (on glass plates). There are also newspaper clippings in several languages about the stir caused by the excavation.

An account of the excavation was published by Father Vincent in 1911 in his book "The Underground Jerusalem"; his findings are consulted to this day by researchers of the First Temple period.

## **JERUSALEM IN THE FIRST CENTURY CE**

"Like a snowy mountain glittering in the sun" - that is how Josephus Flavius, a first century historian, described the outer appearance of the Second Temple, built of three different shades of marble. Today not much remains in the way of concrete evidence of the splendor of the Temple: just the [Western Wall](#), remnant of the Temple Mount enclosure, as well as recent archeological discoveries, literary descriptions, depictions on coins and the fresco in the 3rd century synagogue at Dura Europos in Syria.

The interested observer, however, can see a model (scale 1:50) of [Jerusalem](#) during the Second Temple period at the Holyland Hotel, located on a hill in modern [Jerusalem](#). Israelis and tourists, as well as groups of schoolchildren, come to view the model and to learn about the city before its destruction by the [Romans](#) in 70 CE.

The model was built with the initiative and resources of Mr. Hans Kroch under the supervision of the eminent archeologist Professor Michael Avi-Yonah of the Hebrew University. Professor Avi-Yonah, in turn, based his work on information found in the writings of Josephus Flavius, in the New Testament, in Jewish sources such as the [Mishna](#) and the [Talmud](#) and in the traditions concerning important buildings of the time.

Professor Avi-Yonah supervised the construction of the model and its renovation until his death in 1974. Mrs. Eva Avi-Yonah drew the plans of the entire model, as well as sections and facades of most of the buildings. As far as possible, the model has been constructed of the materials used at the time: marble, copper and iron, stone and wood.

Dr. Yoram Tsafrir of the Hebrew University, who, since the death of Professor Avi-Yonah, has been in charge of updating the model in accordance with the latest archeological discoveries, explains that there may be some inaccuracies in the model, but they are minor. Thus, for example, the round Herodian theater is now known not to be in the right location. "But since we do not know where exactly it was situated, we leave it where it is," maintains Professor Tsafrir, whose expertise is in the [Hellenistic](#), [Roman](#) and [Byzantine](#) eras. He explains that recent archeological findings also prompted a change in the approachway to the Temple. "Now we know that the entrance was to the south," the archeologist states.

Probably the most imposing part of the model are the walls, some as much as 70 cm. high - 35 m. high in actuality. Ancient [Jerusalem](#) was defended by three such walls on its vulnerable northern side, while a single wall was sufficient on the west, south and east, because of the deep valleys surrounding the city on these sides.

Equally imposing are the three towers built by King Herod (37-4 BCE) to protect his palace. The largest, 45 m. high, was called Phasaël, after Herod's brother; the second, Hippicus, 40 m. high, was named after an otherwise unknown friend of the king; and the third, 27.5 m. high, was

called Mariamne after Herod's queen, whom he loved but nevertheless condemned to death. This tower is more ornate than the other two towers, because, in the words of Josephus, "the king considered it appropriate that the tower, named after a woman, should surpass in decoration those called after men."

Herod's palace, currently being redesigned in the model, consisted of two main buildings, each with its banquet halls, baths and bedrooms for hundreds of guests. All around the palace were groves of trees, ponds and walkways.

The hill east of the palace, the Upper City, had been inhabited during biblical times, but was deserted after the Babylonian conquest of [Jerusalem](#) in 586 BCE. During Herod's reign and in the first century, the Upper City, once more inhabited, was the residential quarter of the [Jerusalem](#) aristocracy and priestly families. The Upper Agora, surrounded by porticoes, was the "forum," the place where citizens assembled for business. Another gathering place, this one on the Temple Mount, was the Royal Hall, built by Herod - one of the largest buildings in the Roman Empire.

Clearly discernible in the model are luxurious private buildings, remains of which were uncovered recently, mostly in excavations in the Jewish Quarter. The buildings included large rooms decorated with frescoes and mosaics, bathrooms, water cisterns and ritual baths. One such building, revealed in 1970, is known as the "Burnt House." Filled with the implements of everyday life in the first century CE, it was completely burnt as a result of the conflagration that reduced the Upper City to ashes in the year 70 CE.

The only permanent water source of the city in this period, the monumental Pool of Siloam, is clearly distinguishable in the model. It was fed by waters of the Gihon Spring diverted through Hezekiah's Tunnel, built in the 8th century BCE.

Visible also are the [Western Wall](#) and the Second Temple, built by the returnees from Babylon under Zerubabel (sixth century BCE). Similar to the Temple of Solomon but less ornate, it was enlarged by King Herod and made into the magnificent edifice shown in the model. The important sections of the Temple included separate courts for men, women and priests, as well as the Holy of Holies. The Beautiful Gate led to the Women's Court, beyond which women were not permitted. The Gate of

Nicanor (named after a rich Jew from Alexandria who donated the door), distinguished by its copper color, leads from the Women's Court to the innermost court; it is approached by fifteen curved steps upon which the Levites stood singing and playing music.

"The model, which needs constant refurbishing and maintenance," says Professor Tsafrir, "serves to depict for the visitor how [Jerusalem](#) looked and functioned in the Second Temple period." One can, of course, study the model and then visit the actual excavations in the Old City of [Jerusalem](#).

## JERUSALEM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The visitor to [Jerusalem](#) often begins his tour of the Old City at the Jaffa Gate. The Tower of David Museum of the History of [Jerusalem](#) is located in the magnificent nearby Citadel. Modern methods, including photographs and copies of original artifacts, audio-visual exhibits, illustrations and more, conjure up before the visitor's eyes a colorful procession of events from [Jerusalem](#)'s variegated history. [Jerusalem](#) is all there - from its ancient beginnings to the 20th century.

And should the visitor, on entering the archeological garden, descend some sixty steep steps into an ancient cistern, he will find himself face to face with a portrait of [Jerusalem](#) as it was in the 19th century - in the form of a remarkable model, built by a Hungarian Catholic, Stephan Illes (pronounced il-yesh), a native of Bratislava, at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The area of the model, built to a scale of 1:500, stretches from the Mount of Olives in the east to the Russian Compound (the construction of which began in 1858) in the west, and from the spring of Ein Rogel in the south to beyond the Damascus Gate in the north. Included are the four quarters of the Old City, the Temple Mount, the Mount of Olives, the village of Silwan on the site of the City of David and the Citadel (the Tower of David, used by the [Ottoman Turks](#) as a fortress, and by the British as a venue for cultural activities). Also depicted here are the first Jewish neighborhoods to be built outside the city walls in the mid-nineteenth century: Mishkenot Sha'ananim, the first of these neighborhoods (built between 1857 and 1869), complete with its windmill, as well as the Sultan's Pool (today a site for spectacular performances). The newly-built Hurva and Tiferet Yisrael synagogues, later destroyed during the Jordanian occupation of the city, are seen in the Jewish Quarter. Only six gates are shown along the city walls:

Jaffa Gate, Damascus Gate, Lions' Gate, the sealed Gate of Mercy (Golden Gate), Dung Gate and Zion Gate. Herod's Gate, missing in the model, was reopened in 1874, and the New Gate was added only in 1889. The German Church of the Redeemer is marked by a solitary German flag, while David's Citadel is still surrounded by the moat which was later filled in for the visit of German Kaiser Wilhelm II (1898).

The model is richly detailed: Illes not only reproduced every street and alley in the city and almost every building, but also included flags on the churches, a small cannon, which stands on top of one of the towers of the Citadel, telegraph lines, which were installed in the city in the mid-1860s, and even signs on some of the shops. What is missing are figures of people, but, as Deborah Lipson of the museum explains, the residents of [Jerusalem](#) on this scale would have been only about 3 millimeters high. Weighing about a ton, the model is built in 8 sections for easy transportation, and is made of strips of beaten zinc mounted on a wooden platform.

The fact that this extraordinary model of 19th century [Jerusalem](#), rediscovered only a few years ago in a Geneva storeroom, has found its way to Israel's capital is due to sheer coincidence.

A bookbinder by profession, Illes came to [Jerusalem](#) in 1860. He worked in the Franciscan monastery of St. Savior before opening his own bookbinding business. Caught up in the trend of model-making fashionable in the 18th and 19th centuries, Illes is known to have built two additional models besides the one exhibited at the Tower of David Museum: one of biblical [Jerusalem](#), the other of his contemporary 1880 [Jerusalem](#). No one has yet uncovered their whereabouts. And no one knows what became of Illes after he left [Jerusalem](#) in 1880.

Illes built his model specifically for the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna, where it was displayed in the Ottoman pavilion. This may have accounted for possibly deliberate inaccuracies on the part of Illes: he made the Dome of the Rock twice its actual size and the walls of the city three times as high as they are in reality. He toured Europe with the model, hoping to sell it to raise funds for the building of two more [Jerusalem](#) models. He succeeded in Geneva in 1878, when the 10,000 francs he asked for were raised by some of Geneva's prominent families, including Gustave Moynier, one of the founders of the International Red Cross. For more than 40 years, the model was on display at the Maison de la Reformation, a private evangelical association which assumed its legal ownership.



In 1920, the League of Nations leased the building and the model had to be moved. It was transferred to the attic of Geneva's Public and University Library, where it was stored "provisionally" for 43 years. It was briefly exhibited in 1963, before ending up in storage in the city's Palais Wilson, where it lay forgotten.

Then, one day, Rehav Rubin, a historical geographer at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, came across a reference to the model while preparing a course on ancient maps of [Jerusalem](#). One of his students, Moti Yair, Hungarian by birth, recognized Illes to be a Hungarian name, and decided to find out more about the model and its maker. Sitting over a cup of coffee with friends in the university library a few days later, Yair recounted how he had managed to trace the model to Geneva in 1878, and there he came to a dead end. Another student, Arianne Littman, who was due shortly to go to Geneva for a vacation, overheard him, and offered to try to locate the model there. Her father, David Littman, to whom she told the story, was planning to meet with a veteran librarian at the Public and University Library the following day. As luck would have it, the librarian knew of the model, and it was found with his help. A few months later, the Maison de la Reformation voted unanimously to offer the model to [Jerusalem](#) on permanent loan. Thus, more than 100 years after it was built, the model returned home. It was restored at the Israel Museum and is on exhibit at the Tower of David Museum of the History of [Jerusalem](#) - a unique addition to the wide range of exhibits in the museum.

## JERUSALEM TODAY

The model of modern [Jerusalem](#), located in the main building of the municipality of [Jerusalem](#), is so realistic that by just looking at it, one can immediately locate a particular street or even a specific building. Miniature life-like buses, cars and trees give this Lilliputian image of a throbbing city an added aura of reality. On this 1:500 scale model, even the height of the trees is proportionate to the trees growing in [Jerusalem](#).

"What motivated the creation of the model was the intensification of development at the time of the unification of the city, and the urgent need to preserve the many historical sites," explains Kobi Ariel, director of the [Jerusalem](#) Center for Planning in Historic Cities, where the model is located. "We have adopted the realistic approach in our model," he adds, "because of the universal appeal of [Jerusalem](#). In addition to the spiritual, religious and historical interest our city evokes, we feel it is also



fascinating architecturally. Our model is intended primarily as a tool for architects, developers and planners, as well as for those involved in the municipal decision-making process. Architects with specific projects in mind can try out their ideas on the model. With the help of the visual feedback the model provides, what would normally take weeks or months of abstract discussion often results in quick decisions."

The reason for this efficiency is the model's flexibility. Modular in construction, each of its current 48 units is on wheels and can be moved, taken apart, and thus continually updated. The units represent seven square kilometers (2.7 square miles) of the city's central business district, the government compound, [Jerusalem](#)'s cultural mile and part of the Old City. Currently the model is growing in all directions; soon it will include the rest of the Old City, the Hebrew University campus at Givat Ram, the Valley of the Cross and two major museums - the Israel Museum and the Bible Lands Museum. The model was originally built by American-born Richard Harvey with the help of students of architecture at the Technion in Haifa; it took 15 years to complete. Now retired, Harvey continues to be involved in the construction of additions to the model.

This model is an integral part of the [Jerusalem](#) Center for Planning in Historic Cities, housed in the [Jerusalem](#) municipality complex. "The aim of the Center is to understand urban problems and produce fitting solutions," says Ariel. "We focus on cities with historic significance. Historic cities the world over share similar problems of how to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods and buildings of historical-cultural interest, while adapting to the exigencies of modern living, like creating new residential areas, providing adequate transportation, etc."

One of the principal aims of the Center is to become a forum for local and international planners and designers, a place to meet and exchange ideas. Visitors have included groups of experts, individual professionals dealing with municipal problems and ministers of housing. In addition, the International Mayors' Conference, meeting each year in [Jerusalem](#), schedules one of its sessions at the Center, viewing and discussing the model and its application to the participants' own local realities.

Concurrently with its professional uses, the model also functions as an educational tool. Creative workshops are meant to stimulate school youngsters as well as adults to study urbanization and to help them devise answers to imaginary and real problems in town planning. At the same time, they become sensitized to the aesthetic aspects of such development.

This is particularly important given the great variety of cultural and religious backgrounds of Jerusalem's inhabitants.

Through this model, 3,000-year-old [Jerusalem](#) can serve as a living model for modern life in historic cities.

For further information, please contact:

Model of [Jerusalem](#) in the First Temple Period  
Bone Hahoma St., corner of Plugat Hakotel St.  
Jewish Quarter  
Jerusalem 97500  
Tel: 972-2-628-6288

Model of Ancient Jerusalem  
Holyland Hotel  
Bayit Vegan  
Jerusalem 91023  
Tel: 972-2-643-7777

The Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem  
Jaffa Gate  
P.O. Box 14005  
Jerusalem 91140  
Tel: 972-2-627-4111

Jerusalem Center for Planning in Historic Cities  
Municipality of Jerusalem  
Municipality Complex  
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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Hezekiah's Tunnel

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"When [Hezekiah](#) saw that Sennacherib had come, intent on making war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officers and warriors about stopping the flow of the springs outside the city, and they supported him. A large force was assembled to stop up all the springs and the wadi that flowed through the land, for otherwise, they thought, the king of Assyria would come and find water in abundance" ([2 Chronicles 32:2-4](#)).

These events occurred in the year 701 BCE, when the Assyrian king laid siege to [Jerusalem](#). The Gihon Spring, which was outside the city, confronted King Hezekiah with a double dilemma: to ensure water for the besieged city, yet to deny the source of the water to the [Assyrian](#) forces. The Bible describes Hezekiah's solution: "It was Hezekiah who stopped up the spring of water of Upper Gihon, leading it downward west of the City of David" ([2 Chronicles 32:30](#)). The waters of the Gihon were diverted into the Gai wadi by means of a tunnel 533 meters (581 yards) long, which was hewed from both ends simultaneously, probably along the course of a natural cleft in the rock. An inscription in the rock at the end of the tunnel describes the completion of the project.

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## Hinnom Flank

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Excavations carried out at this site from 1975 to 1980 by an archaeological mission led by Dr. Gabriel Barkai turned up impressive remains of nine burial caves. Extending from the three sides of each cave are "shelves" on which the bodies of the dead were placed. In some of the caves empty spaces were dug beneath the shelves, where the remains of the deceased were placed in order to make room for the more recent dead. The many items found in these vault-like areas vessels, arrowheads, jewelry, a perfume bowl, and others — provide evidence about life in [Jerusalem](#) during the period of the [Kingdom of Judah](#). However, the most exciting find was undoubtedly two minuscule silver scrolls containing the earliest known version of Birkat Hakohanim — the priestly benediction.

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### Jerusalem: An Inscribed Pomegranate from the Solomonic Temple

The Israel Museum recently acquired a thumb-sized ivory pomegranate, 43 mm. high. Its body is vase-shaped and it has a long neck with six elongated petals. The body is solid with a small, rather deep hole in the base, probably for the insertion of a rod. Around the shoulder of the pomegranate is an incised inscription in paleo-Hebrew script, part of which is missing. It was, however, possible to reconstruct the missing word based on the surviving text and biblical evidence. The inscription reads: *sacred donation for the priests of the house of [Yahwe]h*.

This pomegranate is the only known relic associated with the Temple built by King Solomon on Mt. Moriah in [Jerusalem](#). According to its paleographic style, the inscription dates to the mid-8th century BCE. The small pomegranate was probably a gift to the Temple of Yahweh in [Jerusalem](#) — the only such temple in the Kingdom of Judah.

The pomegranate fruit (*rimon* in Hebrew), with its abundance of juicy seeds has been regarded as a symbol of fertility for thousands of years. It is frequently mentioned in the Bible and is one of the seven species with which the Land of Israel is blessed (Deuteronomy 8:8). It was also a favorite motif of Jewish art in ancient times: the capitals of two columns in the facade of the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#) were decorated with pomegranates (1 Kings 7:42) and so were the robes of the High Priest. (Exodus 28: 33-34)

We may therefore assume that the rites performed by the priests in the [Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#) included the use of scepters decorated with pomegranates, such as the one on view in the [Israel Museum](#).

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## JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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## Jerusalem: Architecture in the British Mandate Period

by Lili Eylon

In December 1917, when General Allenby entered the Old City of [Jerusalem](#) on foot, through Jaffa Gate, British rule over Palestine began. The British, who governed first by military government, later (until [Israel's independence](#) in 1948) by [Mandatory administration](#), set up their administrative center for the country in [Jerusalem](#).

During these years, [Jerusalem](#) began its transformation from the provincial town of Ottoman times to a modern administrative, political, religious and cultural center. Building activity began almost immediately and [Jerusalem](#) expanded to the north, south and west. The British determined municipal zones, commercial areas, density of construction, use of materials and height of buildings. Perhaps their most influential contribution to the character of architecture in [Jerusalem](#) was a municipal ordinance – which remains in effect to this day – requiring all new buildings to be faced with stone, giving a certain romantic quality to the buildings.

While much of the public building in [Jerusalem](#) was initiated and financed by Jewish organizations, the British constructed Government House (the residence of the High Commissioner), St. Andrew's Church, the Central Post Office and the Government Printing House. Private building did not lag behind; not so much in the Old City, but outside the walls new neighborhoods were built to accommodate the growing population, each with its own character.

## Jerusalem Neighborhoods

### *Rehavia*

Begun in 1922, the Rehavia neighborhood served as a "garden suburb" for Jewish families who sought to escape the crowded conditions elsewhere in the city. The land used for building was bought by the Palestine Land Development Corporation from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate – which had acquired much land in the city during the 19th century and now found itself in financial straits.

Designed by architect Richard Kaufmann, who planned many of Jerusalem's neighborhoods, the plan provided for a central avenue – Ramban – crisscrossed by streets and Keren Kayemet, a curving street with many small shops.

According to Kaufmann's plan, each family was to have an individual house and garden, and many of the houses were built in a modified Bauhaus style. Features included unadorned facades; small roofs over doors and windows – for shade in the country's subtropical climate; rounded balconies; entrances on the sides of buildings; decorative metal railings on staircases; outdoor iron gates; and art deco details. Two workers' housing cooperatives – *me'onot ovdim* – featured common inner courtyards, separate entrances to apartments, abundant greenery and metal balcony railings.

The Rehavia Gymnasium, the country's second modern high school – the first being the Gymnasia Herzliya in Tel Aviv – was built in 1928 on Keren Kayemet Street. Among its early teachers were Yitzhak Ben Zvi, who was to become the second president of Israel, and Rachel Yanait, who became his wife.

In the 30s, because of the influx of Jews from Germany to the quarter, Rehavia was nicknamed "a Prussian island in an Oriental sea." These newcomers brought with them the concept of afternoon coffee (prompting the emergence of coffee houses) as well as the *Schlafstunde* – the afternoon siesta. The veteran local population gladly adopted both. A tennis court, today a municipal park, is nestled among the homes. A number of family hotels, founded by refugees from Central Europe, catered to people living in coastal towns who came to spend a few summer weeks in cooler, drier [Jerusalem](#). Rehavia even had its own

private bus service to the center of town.

A three-winged structure with a large open courtyard, designed by Yochanan Rattner, housed the Jewish Agency. Before the establishment of the State in 1948, the affairs of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community in Palestine, were conducted in this building. In March 1948 a powerful bomb killed and wounded many persons and devastated the *Keren Hayesod* section of the building. It was later rebuilt with an additional story. The Jewish Agency (which is concerned with the immigration and integration of immigrants); *Keren Hayesod* (which handles financial support from world Jewry); and the Jewish National Fund (which deals with land development and afforestation) are still housed here.

Almost all of Rehavia's streets were named for poets and sages who had lived in Spain in the Golden Age (8th to 12th centuries). Eliezer Park on Ramban Street is named for [Jerusalem](#) architect Eliezer Yellin, who gave the neighborhood the name of the grandson of Moses (1 Chronicles 23:17). Yellin's home on Ramban street was the very first house in the quarter.

Rehavia was home to many of Israel's early leaders, among them Arthur Ruppin, known as the "father of Zionist settlement"; Menachem Ussishkin, head of the Jewish National Fund; and Dov Joseph, a minister in several of Israel's Governments. Here also was the residence of Golda Meir, Israel's fourth prime minister; Daniel Auster, first Jewish mayor of [Jerusalem](#), and philosophers Hugo Bergmann and Gershon Scholem.

The Bauhaus building at No. 3 Balfour was designed by Richard Kaufmann for the wealthy Aghion family from Egypt. In 1939-40 the Aghions let the house to exiled King Peter of Yugoslavia. Today it is the official residence of Israel's prime ministers.

Balfour Street also housed the Guatemalan, Swiss and Turkish consulates. At No. 6 Balfour lived internationally renowned architect Eric Mendelsohn, who designed the Schocken Library; and the home of Zalman Schocken, founder and owner of the *Ha'aretz* newspaper, was at nearby No. 7 Smolenskin Street (today part of the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance). The home of [Moshe Sharett](#), Israel's first foreign minister and second prime minister, was at No.19 Balfour Street, a house designed by Hungarian architect Zoltan Hermet, while [Zalman Shazar](#), prior to assuming office as Israel's third president, lived at No. 20 Balfour Street.

An archeological curiosity in this residential area is Jason's Tomb. A burial tomb from Hasmonean times (2nd century BCE) uncovered in 1956, its Greek and Aramaic inscription includes an epitaph to the unknown Jason.

Today a bastion of the well-to-do, Rehavia is still a quiet neighborhood full of greenery – a pleasant surprise very close to the bustling city center.

### ***Beit Hakerem***

Literally "House of the Vineyard" (from Jeremiah 6:1), Beit Hakerem was the next garden suburb of [Jerusalem](#). Designed by Richard Kaufmann and planned to the last detail before construction, it was built on land acquired from the Greek Patriarchate as well as from private owners.

Beit Hakerem was built outside the municipal jurisdiction, its inhabitants paid no taxes, and a neighborhood *va'ad* (committee) was elected to take care of the quarter's water and electricity supplies, transportation and other needs. *The va'ad* stipulated that Beit Hakerem include a marketplace, a sports field, a synagogue, a park, an electric power station, a school and a cooperative grocery. It was also decided that whoever bought a house had to live in it, and could lease it only with prior permission from the *va'ad*.

The price of a plot in Beit Hakerem was about one tenth of that in Rehavia and soon writers, teachers and white collar workers moved in. The first 60 houses, many of them designed by architect Yehuda Salant, were ready in 1924.

Modeled after European cities, the quarter consists of parallel streets connected by smaller lanes and a central avenue designed as a pedestrian promenade; today it bustles with motor traffic. In the center of its commercial area is Denmark Square, commemorating the Danish people's rescue of Jews during World War II.

Very green and well-maintained, Beit Hakerem is today a desirable residential neighborhood.

### ***Talbiya***

Talbiya, Katamon, Abu Tor and Bak'a, built in the 1920s and 1930s, were

affluent neighborhoods inhabited mostly by Christian Arabs. The houses boasted large gardens with citrus, fig, palm and cypress trees. Eclectic architectural elements graced the homes, including Renaissance, Moorish and Arab motifs and Armenian ceramic decorations.

Talbiya (its Hebrew name is Komemiut, but it is still commonly referred to by its older name), a prestigious neighborhood, was built between 1924-37. Constantine Salameh, a Christian Arab merchant and building contractor, purchased the land from the Greek Patriarchate, sold part and built on the other part.

Salameh built a luxurious villa with a large garden for his family, planned by French architect M. Favier (who also planned the French consulate). A symmetrical facade and straight lines characterize this imposing building, which has been the residence of the Belgian consul since 1949. The interior is no less impressive than the exterior: an octagonal fountain graces the central hall and some of the rooms have wooden ceilings and floors of white and gray Carrera marble.

The villa faces a flowering square – actually a circle – originally named Salameh Square. Today it is called Wingate Square – in commemoration of [Orde Wingate](#), the British officer who, in the late 30s, trained members of the [Haganah](#), the Jewish self-defense underground organization.

Marcus Street is another street noted for its beautiful houses built during mandatory times. It is named for [Col. David \(Mickey\) Marcus](#), an officer in the U.S. army who volunteered to be a military advisor in Israel's [War of Independence](#).

## Jerusalem Buildings

### *Terra Sancta*

The Italian architect Antonio Berlucci planned this monumental structure (1924-27) which at first served as a community center for Catholic youth, and later, with the opening of the YMCA, became a vocational high school. Situated on Keren Hayesod Street, this symmetrical building with its horizontal lines between stories, combines Italian Renaissance and neo-baroque elements. Prince Umberto, later King of Italy, came to [Jerusalem](#) in 1928 to dedicate the statue poised on the roof – the haloed Madonina, patron saint of Milano.



When the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus became inaccessible in 1948, the university rented part of the Terra Sancta building from the Franciscan custodians of the Latin Holy Places and set up a number of its departments in it. It was not until 1997 that the last university department, Climatology, left Terra Sancta. In 1999 the building still remains home to the Friends of the Hebrew University but it is scheduled to revert completely to its owners.

### *The Hebrew University on Mount Scopus*

In 1897, at the [first Zionist Congress](#), the idea of a Jewish university in Palestine was discussed. The establishment of such an institution, at a time when many young Jews were denied access to university study in European countries, such as Russia, would be "a response to a deep-seated need of the homeless young Jewish intellectuals," in the words of Prof. [Chaim Weizmann](#), later first president of the State of Israel.

With funds provided by Russian, English and American [Zionists](#), land was acquired on Mount Scopus and the cornerstone was laid in 1918. In a 1921 master plan for [Jerusalem](#), Scottish town planner and architect Patrick Geddes designated the entire ridge of Mount Scopus for a university.

On April 1, 1925 the festive opening of the university took place in the presence of Professor [Chaim Weizmann](#), the British High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel and the architect of the Balfour Declaration, Lord Arthur Balfour, who at age 77, had come from England for the occasion. At this point, only one building existed – the Chaim Weizmann School of Chemistry and Institute of Microbiology. In that first year, the new university boasted 164 students and a collection of 82,500 books.

In his speech at the inauguration, Prof. Weizmann stated, "It seems at first sight paradoxical that in a land with so sparse a population, in a land where everything still remains to be done, in a land crying out for such simple things as ploughs, roads and harbors, we should be creating a center of spiritual and intellectual development. But it is no paradox for those who know the soul of the Jew. It is true that great social and political problems still face us and will demand their solution. We Jews know that when the mind is given fullest play, when we have a center for the development of Jewish consciousness, then coincidentally, we shall attain the fulfillment of our material needs."



Construction continued on the university campus: the Einstein Institute of Mathematics, 1928; the Wolffsohn Building housing the Jewish National and University Library, 1930; the Einstein Institute of Physics, 1930; and the Rosenbloom Institute of Jewish Studies, 1938. These buildings were designed by Prof. Patrick Geddes, his son-in-law John Mears and the supervising architect, English-born Bernard Chaikin. The same team also rebuilt the Chemistry-Microbiology building after it had been damaged in the 1927 earthquake. The year 1933 saw the completion of the amphitheater planned by architect Fritz Kornberg. Further faculties and buildings were added and by 1948, 15 buildings made up the campus while the student body was composed of several hundred persons.

During the 1948 [War of Independence](#), when Jordan captured the eastern part of [Jerusalem](#), the university campus was cut off, becoming a demilitarized zone in Jordanian territory. At first the university departments were scattered throughout the city; later, in 1958, they were unified once more on the Givat Ram Campus.

After the reunification of [Jerusalem](#) in 1967, many of the faculties returned to the Mt. Scopus campus and many new buildings were added.

### ***The Palace Hotel***

The Palace Hotel was built in 1928-29 on the initiative of the Supreme Muslim Council, during the term of Raghib Nashashibi as the British-appointed mayor of [Jerusalem](#). Designed by Turkish architect Nahas Bey and built by one Arab and two Jewish contractors employing some 500 workers, the four-story building was completed in the record time of eleven months (the contract stipulated a deadline of 13 months, with a 1000 pound fine for each day of delay).

A mixture of Greco-Roman, Renaissance, Gothic, Romanesque, neo-Moorish and Mamluk elements was combined in this eclectic structure, which became one of the most luxurious buildings in [Jerusalem](#). Located a short walk from the Old City, at the bottom of Agron Street (previously Mamilla Road), the building was meant to be a showpiece of Arab architecture in [Jerusalem](#), both in appearance and in the comfort it afforded. Of the 145 rooms, 45 had private bathrooms – unheard of in the country at the time – and there were three elevators and central heating – another rare luxury. The facade was adorned with engraved verses from the Koran and the entrance lobby, topped by an octagonal skylight,

reached to the entire height of the building. Decorative columns with Doric, Ionic and Corinthian capitals grace the entrance, and the lighting fixtures throughout the building were done in the art deco style.

The financial load of the hotel's upkeep proved too much for the Supreme Muslim Council, and it leased the hotel to hotelier George Barsky, who, in turn, found that he could not compete with the nearby King David Hotel, once it opened in 1931. Shortly thereafter the Palace Hotel ended its career as a hotel; it was turned into administrative and military offices of the mandatory government. In 1937, the Royal [Peel Commission](#), which investigated the ongoing [Arab riots](#) and recommended the partition of Palestine, convened in the hotel. Since the [establishment of the State](#) in 1948, the building has housed the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

### ***Government House***

Hidden among pines and cypresses on a 16-acre hilltop in a southern corner of the city (known as the Hill of Evil Counsel) is Government House. Opened in 1930 by Sir Arthur Wauchope, the High Commissioner for Palestine, it served as the residence of a number of British high commissioners. The structure, built in an octagonal shape of locally quarried stone, was designed by architects A. Harrison and C. Holliday. The unusual shape seems to have been a favorite of the architects; it is evident in the private apartment of the high commissioner as well as in the fountain – similar to those found in North African palaces – in the formal garden. Other distinguishing features of the building are its domes, interior arches, crossed vaults and a monumental four-meter high ceramic fireplace of Armenian tiles created by David Ohanessian. Today the building serves as the UN headquarters in [Jerusalem](#).

### ***The King David Hotel***

The Palestine Hotel Company – a company of which the Mosseri family, Egyptian Jewish bankers, were part owners – purchased a 4.5-acre tract from the Greek Patriarchate for \$150,000 in order to build a luxury hotel in [Jerusalem](#). The rectangular two-story building, constructed of locally quarried pink sandstone and boasting 200 rooms and 60 bathrooms, was opened in 1931 on Julian's Way – today King David Street.

Swiss interior decorator Hofschmidt, asked to draw on the "ancient Semitic style," attempted to create an atmosphere evocative of the glorious time of King David, with a high-ceilinged, marble-floored lobby,

muted green and beige colors, and Egyptian, Assyrian, Hittite, Phoenician and Greek motifs in public areas. Motifs depicting biblical plants such as pomegranates and vines and stars of David decorate the rooms. The spacious terrace offers a wide-angle view of the Old City.

Until a proper kitchen was organized, food for the dining room came by train from Cairo, and was served, with pomp and circumstance, by waiters decked out in long white robes with broad red sashes, fezzes and white gloves. But shortly after the festive opening, the hotel was forced to close down for two years, due to a worldwide economic depression and Arab riots, neither of which were conducive to tourism.

When the hotel opened again in 1933, it hosted such royalty as the dowager empress of Persia, queen mother Nazli of Egypt and King Abdullah I of Jordan, who arrived with a retinue on horses and camels. The hotel afforded asylum to three royal heads of state who had to flee their countries: King Alfonso XIII of Spain, forced to abdicate in 1931; Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, driven out by the Italians in 1936; and King George II of Greece, who set up his government in exile at the hotel after the Nazi occupation of his country in 1942.

During the [Arab riots](#) in 1936-39, the British army leased the top floor of the hotel as its emergency headquarters. Later the entire southern wing became the administrative and military center of British rule in Palestine.

In July 1946, a [bomb](#) placed in the restaurant kitchen by a Jewish underground movement, the [Etzel](#) (*Irgun Tzva'i Le'umi*), killed 91 people and destroyed the southern wing. The hotel became a British fortress until May 4, 1948, when the British flag was lowered, and the building became a Jewish stronghold.

At the end of the [War of Independence](#), the hotel found itself overlooking no-man's land, on the borderline which divided [Jerusalem](#) into Israeli and Jordanian territory.

In 1967, when [Jerusalem](#) was reunited, the hotel, under new management, added two floors; the builders used the same type of sandstone, from a Hebron quarry, which had been used in the original construction in 1930.

In the course of the years, many heads of state have stayed at the King David Hotel, among them U.S. Presidents Nixon, Carter, Bush and

Clinton, President [Anwar Sadat](#) of Egypt during his dramatic visit to [Jerusalem](#) in 1977, Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major of Great Britain, President Francois Mitterand of France, President Richard Weizsaecker of Germany, President Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR, and entertainment stars such as Elizabeth Taylor and Danny Kaye.

### *The YMCA*

What do the Empire State Building in New York City and the YMCA building in [Jerusalem](#) have in common? Each was the tallest structure in its city at the time it was built, and both were designed by the same architect, Arthur Louis Harmon.

In 1920, the American Association of the YMCA sent Director Archibald Harte to [Jerusalem](#). He promptly fell in love with the city and wanted to build a center in which the three monotheistic religions would find expression. In 1924, contributions from philanthropist James Jarvie of New Jersey, the American and British YMCAs and the Jewish community of Manchester enabled the purchase of land from the Greek Patriarchate for this purpose.

Three years later, British High Commissioner Lord Plumer laid the cornerstone of the building and on April 18, 1933 the [Jerusalem](#) YMCA, directly opposite the King David Hotel, was opened by Field Marshall Lord Allenby.

At the entrance to the building the following words, spoken by Lord Allenby on that occasion, are inscribed in Hebrew, English and Arabic: "Here is a place whose atmosphere is peace, where political and religious jealousies can be forgotten and international unity fostered and developed."

The building is a combination of Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic and neo-Moorish architecture. It is, above all, a symbolic building, meant to be reminiscent of early architectural traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Thus, the foundation contains stones from quarries believed to have been used in the construction of the Second Temple. The Christian aspect is evident in the Romanesque and Gothic styles, exemplified, *inter alia*, by the vaulted ceilings in the main lounge, while a large dome and painted arabesques in the entrance hall are typically Islamic elements. On the floor of the lobby is an excellent mosaic replica of the famed map of Madaba. A painted wooden 17th century ceiling was purchased in

Damascus, dismantled and transported to [Jerusalem](#) where it now graces the YMCA's main entrance hall. Continuing the symbolism, 40 columns in the forecourt arcade represent the 40 years the Jews wandered in the desert and the 40 days of temptation of Jesus. The twelve windows in the auditorium and twelve cypress trees in the garden are meant to signify the twelve tribes, the twelve disciples of Jesus and the twelve followers of Mohammed.

The building is divided into three units: the main section, with its education and hotel facilities, a 600-seat auditorium with a 2,519-pipe organ, a gift of the Juilliard Music Foundation, and a wing with sports facilities. Here was the city's first swimming pool.

From the top of the 50-meter tower one has a panoramic view of [Jerusalem](#) and surroundings. High on the tower is a relief figure of the six-winged seraph of Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:2-3). The capitals of two columns at the entrance, of polished red stone, depict the Woman of Samaria with a jug on her head, mentioned in the New Testament, and a lamb representing the sacrifice of Jesus.

On special occasions, the YMCA's 35 carillon bells – the largest of which weighs one and a half tons – are activated. The carillon chamber also contains carvings of instruments mentioned in the bible: lyre, horn and harp.

A library of 50,000 volumes in five languages contains books on the Holy Land – its history, travel, geography and archeology. A unique feature of the education department is a Jewish-Arab kindergarten where some 150 youngsters annually learn to live and play together.

The [Jerusalem](#) YMCA, with its 3000 members (78% Jews, 12% Moslems and 10% Christians) is today an important center of cultural, social and athletic life in the city. Its activities are multifaceted – karate classes, a children's day camp, art workshops and senior citizens' clubs. One of the capital's Rotary clubs has been meeting there since 1935, working to promote interfaith and interracial understanding.

### ***The Rockefeller Museum***

Intensified archeological activity in the Holy Land in the first decades of the 20th century prompted the need for a dignified venue to store and exhibit the finds. American philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller, donated



two million \$US for building, equipping and maintaining a museum, and the British mandatory government also provided a subsidy. Rockefeller stipulated that the museum bearing his name be an archeological, not a natural science museum, and that the museum's exhibits should shed light on the part played by the peoples of the Holy Land in world history. The building was to be located opposite the northeast corner of [Jerusalem](#)'s Old City walls.

The planning of the museum was entrusted to Austen St. Barbe Harrison who served as chief architect of the public works department of the mandatory government and who also planned Government House, the central post office in [Jerusalem](#) and a district court in Haifa. Harrison traveled to Europe to inspect museums; his idea was to combine European and Mediterranean elements.

While the structure was inspired by Elizabethan and Jacobean buildings, it is the eastern features that are particularly striking: the inner arches, the doors made of Turkish walnut wood, the profusion of Armenian tiles and the inner courtyard reminiscent of the 14th century Alhambra Palace in Spain. This beautiful inner courtyard is graced with stone engravings by the noted British artist Eric Gill, depicting peoples who lived in the country throughout the centuries: Canaanites, Jews, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Persians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamluks and Ottoman Turks. This courtyard, incidentally, inspired the planners of the Supreme Court, built in the 1990s, when they designed its inner courtyard, with a similar long, narrow pool of water.

Construction of the stone and reinforced-concrete building – designed, at Rockefeller's insistence, to provide protection against earthquakes – was slow, partly because the remains of an ancient cemetery from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine eras were uncovered when the foundations were dug.

Harrison, with many buildings to his credit, considered the Rockefeller Museum the jewel in his crown. But when the museum finally opened in 1938, neither the donor nor the architect were present and neither saw the museum completed.

The Rockefeller Museum houses finds ranging from the prehistoric eras to the 1700s. Among its treasures are the as yet undeciphered Dead Sea Scrolls. After 1948, when the area came under Jordanian rule, the museum was administered briefly by an international council, but,



recognizing its tremendous value, the Jordanian government soon nationalized it. Since 1968, the Rockefeller Museum is an integral part of the Israel Museum.

### *The Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus*

The Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus opened its doors in 1938. Located on a hill 830 meters above sea level, it was designed by German-born architect Eric Mendelsohn, who had acquired a worldwide reputation in pre-Hitler Germany. In "Five Architects from Five Centuries," a 1976 exhibition in Berlin, he was chosen to represent the twentieth century.

The hospital was the idea of Hadassah, Zionist women's organization in the United States which was founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold. The American Jewish Physicians Committee, formed by Albert Einstein and Chaim Weizmann and the 82,000 members of Hadassah, raised funds for the project. The 200-bed hospital was completed in 1938 at a cost of one million \$US.

In Palestine in the late 1930s, one of every 225 Jews was a doctor, many of them having fled from Europe. Professor Ludwig Halberstaedter of the University of Berlin brought with him a tiny amount of radium and opened the first radium and X-ray institute in the Middle East. Working together with cytologist Dr. Leonid Doljansky, he was able to provide the first treatment for cancer in the country. At the same time, Professor Bernhard Zondek, another new immigrant, helped develop the first reliable pregnancy test, the A-Z test, while Berlin-born Professor Hanoch Milwidsky carried out the first heart operation in the Middle East.

The Hadassah Hospital complex has low buildings blending into the landscape and three concrete domes, a gesture to the oriental style and nearby Arab villages. Circular forms are one of Mendelsohn's trademarks; in the Hadassah Hospital they appear in the round balconies of the nursing school, and the many round windows and light fixtures in the building. "I want to create monumental austerity," Mendelsohn said.

At one stage during the building, when the quarries were closed because of Arab riots, the builders used artificial stones. This was, in fact welcomed by Mendelsohn, who believed in man-made materials. On rainy days, one can still see the difference between the natural stone and the artificial variety.

Patients from many lands, including neighboring countries, were treated in the hospital when it opened in 1938 and during World War II, Allied soldiers were treated here. On April 13, 1948, an armed group of Arabs ambushed a convoy of doctors and nurses on their way to the hospital, killing 78 of them. The hospital stopped functioning. At the end of the War of Independence, it was in no-man's land, cut off from the city. An alternate site was chosen in Ein Karem, at the other end of the city, and [Jerusalem](#)'s second Hadassah hospital was built there.

In 1978, the Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus reopened, with renovated buildings and numerous new wings. On its extensive lawn stands the last work of noted sculptor Jacques Lipshitz. Depicting the biblical figures of Noah, Abraham and Isaac, an angel holding the burning bush, [Moses](#) bearing the Tablets of the Law and a seven-branched menorah (candelabrum), the sculpture is called the "Tree of Life."

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## Jerusalem: Architecture in the late Ottoman Period

by Lili Eylon

*"...Jerusalem with its marvelous panorama made a tremendous impression upon me. The streets were thronged with Jews, strolling in the moonlight.... [Jerusalem:] My first act will be to cleanse thee. All that is not holy I shall clear away and I shall erect homes for the workers outside the city. And whilst preserving as much as possible of the ancient style of building, I shall build a spacious new city around the Holy Places, airy and well-drained. The Old City with its Holy Places, I would enclose as in a box. All trade and commerce will be removed and only houses of worship and charitable institutions will remain within the walls. And all around on the slopes, grown green through our efforts, the new Jerusalem will arise, entirely beautiful... Things that are holy will remain within the walls, and things that are new will prevail in the surrounding distance."*

**Theodor Herzl, father of modern Zionism, who visited  
Jerusalem in 1898**

Jerusalem is a city like no other – it has fired people's imaginations in every generation and is revered by adherents of the three monotheistic faiths. Walking her streets are Ethiopian Church clerics and American Jewish students, Arab shopkeepers and ultra-orthodox Jews, schoolchildren from Odessa and their peers from Marseilles and Prague, immigrants born in Milan, São Paulo and Melbourne. Jerusalem's

relatively small municipal expanse is inhabited by a fantastic mosaic of humanity. Jerusalem also boasts an amazing variety of public buildings and private dwellings. The style of each reflects the culture of a particular group of residents and a particular period in the city's history.

Until 1860 almost all of Jerusalem's residents lived in the Old City. Its present walls were constructed by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). Crowded conditions in the Old City led Jerusalemites to look for housing solutions outside the walls, and new neighborhoods were built, beginning in the late nineteenth century under Ottoman Turkish rule.

The map of Jerusalem drawn by Sir Charles William Wilson in 1864 (who directed the 1864-66 survey of Jerusalem) shows only barren hills and a few dirt trails leading to the city within the walls. The only buildings outside the walls are Mishkenot Sha'ananim, the Montefiore Windmill, the Russian Compound and the Monastery of the Cross. But by the beginning of World War I, many neighborhoods had been established, mainly in the area of Mea Shearim along Jaffa Road.

Many of the developers of those years were Jews returning to the land of their fathers; but others also came to build – Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Russians, Italians, Turks, Ethiopians, Armenians and Greeks – Muslims and Christians – all contributed to the urban fabric of Jerusalem.

"Thus the new Jerusalem grows by accessions from every part of the globe," Edwin Sherman Wallace, United States consul in Jerusalem wrote in 1898. "On the streets all sorts and conditions of Jews and Gentiles meet and pass one another; they may be strangers to each other and ignorant of the part they are playing, but I cannot resist the belief that each is doing his part in God's plan for the rebuilding of the city and its enlargement far beyond the borders it has occupied in the past."

Today, with growing consciousness about the preservation and conservation of old buildings worldwide, Israelis too, are slating many of the early buildings of Jerusalem outside the walls for official preservation. In view of the need for modern urbanization, this task is far from easy.

Following are the stories of some of Jerusalem's buildings and quarters built between the years 1860 and 1917, and the people who played a role in their creation.

## Mishkenot Sha'ananim and Yemin Moshe

In 1855, on his fourth visit to Palestine, British-Jewish banker-philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) bought ten acres of land for 1000 pounds sterling from a wealthy Moslem. On this plot of land, in 1860, he established the first Jewish residential quarter outside the walls of the Old City. It was named Mishkenot Sha'ananim – peaceful habitation. The new neighborhood was financed from the estate of the Jewish philanthropist Judah Touro of New Orleans and designed by William A. Smith from Ramsgate in England, the town where Sir Moses lived. Meant to house both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, the two long, narrow buildings, which contained 16 small apartments under an innovative (for Jerusalem) flat roof, had an Ashkenazi synagogue at one end and a Sephardi synagogue at the other. There were also cisterns for drinking water, a ritual bath, public cooking ovens and a wind-driven flour mill where some of the residents earned a living. The windmill has now been converted into a museum in which Montefiore's horse-drawn carriage is exhibited.

Despite the neighborhood's name (taken from Isaiah 32:18): "And my people shall abide in a peaceful habitation and in secure dwellings and in quiet resting places," the dwellings, situated opposite Mount Zion above the Hinnom Valley, were far from safe. For protection, iron bars were placed on doors and windows, and the gates leading to the quarter were locked every night. The first occupants had to be paid by Sir Moses to move in. But in 1866, after an epidemic broke out in the Old City but not in Mishkenot Sha'ananim, the buildings became fully occupied.

Mishkenot Sha'ananim, today part of the residential quarter named Yemin Moshe after Sir Moses, serves as the municipality's official guest house with a restaurant. Adjacent to it is the renowned Music Center where famous musicians hold masterclasses for gifted young Israelis. Here cellist Pablo Casals gave his last concert, two weeks before his death.

## The Schneller Complex

As so many places in Jerusalem, the Schneller complex is named for the man who built it. A German Lutheran missionary, Father Johann Ludwig Schneller (1820-96) bought land from the Arab villagers of Lifta in 1856, and brought skilled laborers from Bethlehem and Bet Jalla to construct eight buildings, which were completed in stages between 1856 and 1903. The architecture is a blend of German and Middle Eastern styles, with



massive iron gates which were locked at night. Most of the buildings have suffered neglect; today only some remain in their original form.

The Lutheran Church and Father Schneller hoped that the complex would serve the local population and alleviate its suffering. He established a school for the blind, an orphanage and workshops where the youngsters could learn a trade. He himself directed the entire enterprise. The workshops manufactured bricks and roof tiles, as well as window grills, gates, railings and manhole covers. One building served as the church, and several others served as housing for the staff.

During World War I, the Schneller Compound was turned into an army camp by the Turks. Today it serves as a medical installation for the Israel Defense Forces. Eight of the old buildings have been earmarked for preservation.

## **The Russian Compound**

The monumental Russian Compound was built between 1860 and 1864 to serve the many Russian pilgrims, who were at that time more numerous than the pilgrims from any other country. Before World War I, the average annual number of Russian pilgrims was about 14,000 – some even made the entire pilgrimage from Russia on foot! All the building materials for the compound, as well as the furniture for the seven buildings, were brought from Russia by a Russian shipping line established for that purpose, which also brought shiploads of pilgrims. The Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, based in St. Petersburg, was the initiator and backer of the huge undertaking, and Russian architect Martin Ivanovich Eppinger was responsible for its design and building. Spread over 18.5 acres and clearly influenced by Byzantine architecture, the compound consisted of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, the residence of the Russian Orthodox religious mission, a consulate, a hospital and separate hostels for men and women, with 2,000 beds. Sometimes tents had to be erected to accommodate the crowds!

The Sergei Imperial Hospice, named after Grand Duke Sergei, brother to Czar Alexander III, and then President of the Provoslavic Palestine Association, occupied nine acres of land and was completed in 1889; its 25 luxuriously furnished rooms were intended as lodgings for aristocrats. In 1870, the newspaper "*Havatzet*" commented about the hospice: "The new hostel for the Russians, this huge and splendid building, is made entirely out of hewn stone and is one of the most marvelous buildings in



our city"; and describes the cathedral as, "a fabulous structure standing on a lofty site."

Before World War I, the large courtyards contained stables, storerooms, chicken coops, wells and a laundry. During the British Mandate period, the buildings housed government offices, such as the Public Works Department and the Immigration Office. The Russian Mission remained in one of the buildings until 1967.

The property, except for the cathedral and one building, was purchased by the government of Israel in the 1960s. The Jerusalem municipality was built here; the Ministry of Agriculture, magistrate and district courts, Jerusalem's police headquarters and a detention facility, as well as the offices of the Society for the Preservation of Nature, are housed in the compound's buildings. In the former Russian consulate, now part of the municipality complex, the offices of the Jerusalem Development Authority and Moriah (the Jerusalem Development Company) are now located.

The Russian compound presents the largest potential site for development in the center of Jerusalem. Plans include a circular public plaza around the cathedral, a shopping center with underground parking and renovation and redesignation of historic buildings.

## Nahlaot

Nahlaot is the popular term for a number of small residential quarters in the heart of the city, constructed between the 1860s and the beginning of the twentieth century. One of these, the Ashkenazi quarter of Mazkeret Moshe, is among the many places named for Sir Moses Montefiore. Another, the Sephardi neighborhood of Mazkeret Ohel, where the former president Yitzhak Navon grew up, served as an inspiration for his play, *Bustan Sephardi*.

Nahlat Shiva, the first of the Nahlaot group, was begun in 1869 and named for its seven founders. It is graced by picturesque narrow side streets, open courtyards, and many synagogues.

By the 1970s, Nahlat Shiva, now in the center of modern Jerusalem, was in disrepair and entrepreneurs were eager to construct high-rise buildings there. But a growing awareness of the value of old buildings and public outcry prevented its destruction. A major restoration and face-lifting

project has since given the area a new, special atmosphere. Solomon Street (named after one of the seven founders) is now a pedestrian mall, with restaurants, art galleries and many shops where artists and craftsman offer their wares.

## **Ticho House**

Some houses reflect the personalities of the people who lived in them. One such residence is Ticho House, named after Dr. Abraham Ticho (1883-1960), an ophthalmologist who in 1912 emigrated from Vienna together with his wife Anna, a renowned artist. He opened an eye clinic near the Old City, where Jewish and Arab patients, mainly sufferers from the very widespread trachoma, waited in line every day to be treated, often free of charge. Dr. Ticho became a legend in his lifetime throughout the Middle East.

In 1924, the doctor and his wife decided to change neighborhoods. They moved to a house situated between Jaffa Road and the Street of the Prophets, built in 1864 by Aga Rashid Nashashibi who sold it five years later to antique dealer Moses Shapira (known for allegedly selling fake artifacts to the British Museum). The design of the building is typically Arab: a central hall with rooms leading off it, massive stone walls and a domed roof. A terraced garden, with fruit trees, vegetables and flowers, graced the grounds.

The house also served as Dr. Ticho's clinic, where he treated local residents as well as patients from across the nearby border from the 1920s until his death in 1960. His wife Anna became famous for her drawings of the hills of Jerusalem which were exhibited locally and abroad.

Today Ticho House, with its beautiful garden, is part of the Israel Museum. On display are Anna Ticho's paintings and the doctor's collection of Hanukkah lamps. Ticho House, with its library, garden and cafe-restaurant, has also become a venue for concerts by new immigrants and for story-telling events.

## **The German Colony**

The German Colony was established by members of the Templer sect, which was founded in Germany in 1858. They came to Palestine in the late nineteenth century to escape religious persecution and to put their religious beliefs into practice: that establishing colonies in the Holy Land

would realize the visions of the prophets. Other Templers built settlements in Haifa, Jaffa and the Galilee.

In 1873, Arabs sold the Templers a large area situated in the biblical Rephaim Valley, southwest of the Old City. There they built a colony similar to villages in southern Germany: one- and two-story houses with green shutters, red tile roofs and fenced-in gardens. Middle Eastern elements were added and Jerusalem stone was used as the building material.

The neighborhood has two major streets, Emek Rephaim and Bethlehem, and small interconnecting roads. The first house, No. 6 Emek Rephaim, was built in 1873 by the miller Matthäus Frank (1846-1923). The house boasted a steam-powered mill, a vineyard, two cisterns and even a swimming pool enjoyed by the neighborhood youngsters. A year later, Friedrich Eberle built his house at No. 10 Emek Rephaim. The entrance bore an inscription "Der Herr liebe die Thore Zions über alle Wohnungen Jakobs." (The Lord loves the gates of Zion above all of the dwelling places of Jacob, Psalms 87:2.) The house at No. 7 was a restaurant, while another house was inhabited by architect Sandler. In 1883 the Gemeindehaus (community center) at No. 1 Emek Rephaim began to serve the residents as both a prayer house and a meeting place. Later on, this building became an Armenian church, little used since 1967 (with the reunification of Jerusalem, all Armenians can once more worship at the Armenian cathedral in the Old City).

The founder of the Templer sect, Christoff Hoffman, is buried in the cemetery located at No. 39 Emek Rephaim, which contains 250 old German graves as well as new graves of non-Jews.

In 1894, German nuns built the Convent of the Borromean Sisters on Bethlehem Road, later adding a hospice, a school and an old age home.

The German residents of the German colony became carpenters, blacksmiths, builders and gardeners as well as farmers. Many of them were Nazi sympathizers during World War II, and they were interned by the British and were later repatriated in Germany or deported to Australia. In 1948 new immigrants became the residents of the German Colony.

In the last 15 years the area has developed enormously. shops of all kinds, restaurants and coffee shops, a movie theater showing classical films, a repertory theater and a night club at the Khan Theater are enjoyed by

Jerusalemites and visitors in this bustling neighborhood. The only traces of its one-time pastoral atmosphere are on canvas – captured by German artist Gustav Bauernfeind who had made his home in the German Colony in those early days.

## Mea Shearim

A contiguous block of settlement, with each set of houses built around a communal courtyard, is what characterized the Mea Shearim quarter, a neighborhood located outside the Old City walls. Its name – hundredfold – stems from the biblical portion read during the week in December 1873 when the Mea Shearim Society was established: "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold, and the Lord blessed him" (Genesis 26:12).

Conrad Schick, a German missionary, planned Mea Shearim in 1846. Joseph Rivlin, one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, was one of its founding fathers; and a Christian Arab from Bethlehem, who employed both Jewish and non-Jewish workers, was the construction contractor.

When the first ten houses were built, the Society issued the following statement: "...the Lord gave some of the members of our Society the will to serve as pioneers and example to their brethren, and they had in fact taken their lives into their hands... These volunteers indeed suffered great hardships in the early days, for they were as famished souls in the virgin desert, being forced to walk to the Old City for every basic need. And the Lord put joy in their hearts... and the wailing of foxes, and wild animals around them at night stirred their hearts as the strains of beautiful melodies."

In Mea Shearim, the quarter's gates were locked every evening and opened every morning. By October 1880, some 100 dwellings were ready for occupancy and lots for ownership of houses – in perpetuity – were drawn at a festive gathering. Four years later, 150 homes were ready; 300 by the turn of the century. A flour mill, the Berman bakery, and cowsheds were built – replacing Conrad Schick's plan for the creation of an open green area in each courtyard. But it was the first quarter in Jerusalem to have street lights. Today, Mea Shearim remains an insulated neighborhood with an ultra-orthodox population, and its synagogues, schools and shops cater to the needs of this community.

## Tabor House

Conrad Schick, born in Germany in 1822, came to Jerusalem in 1846 as a Protestant missionary. His colorful career included planning many buildings and neighborhoods in Jerusalem, introducing new techniques of design and construction; excavating with the Palestine Exploration Society; and working as a city engineer in the Turkish-administered municipality of Jerusalem. At one point, he built a model of the Second Temple, sold it for 800 gold pieces and began to realize a private dream: a home for himself and his family. It was completed in 1889.

He named his home Tabor House. Located at No. 58 Street of the Prophets, a large beautiful building, with traces of old and new, western and eastern styles, within a walled courtyard. Schick took its name from Psalm 89:12: "The north and the south, Thou has created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name." Palm leaves with the carved Greek letters Alpha and Omega, symbolizing the beginning and the end, decorate the facade of his house. When Conrad Schick died in Jerusalem in 1901, he was mourned by Jews, Moslems and Christians alike.

The house was bought in 1951 by Swedish Protestants, who established in it the Swedish Theological Seminary for religious instruction and for studies of the Land of Israel.

## The Bukharan Quarter

The origins of the Bukharan Quarter were quite different from those of Jerusalem's other early residential neighborhoods. To begin with, it was fully planned. Then, in contrast to the poorer Jews from Eastern Europe whose building aspirations were financed mainly by Jews from abroad, wealthy Jews from Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent built mansions for themselves, some of them "summer homes."

The first immigrants from these cities - in what is today Uzbekistan - arrived in Jerusalem in the 1870s and 1880s. They bought the land for their houses and employed Conrad Schick to plan the quarter. The 1891 Code of Ordinances of the *Hovevei Zion* Association of the Jewish communities of Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent stated that: "...the streets and marketplaces [are to be] built as in important European cities, and the arrangement and style of building should follow European practice, that the quarter become a proud part of Jerusalem."



And so it was: the quarter was built with wide streets (three times the width of the broadest thoroughfares in Jerusalem at the time), spacious family homes and large courtyards. German, Italian and Muslim influences marked the houses: there were neo-Gothic windows, European tiled roofs, New-Moorish arches and Italian marble. Jewish motifs such as the Star of David and Hebrew letters decorated the facades. The buildings were mostly asymmetrical, commensurate with the residents' belief that perfection belongs to God alone.

Construction of the quarter stretched from 1891 to the early 1950s; altogether, some 200 houses were built. During World War I, the Turkish army requisitioned a number of buildings and cut down all the trees in the area. After the Russian Revolution, these Jerusalemites were suddenly cut off from their relatives abroad, who had been running their businesses and sending them funds. Many residents, in financial straits, had to let parts of their homes.

At the war's end, some of Jerusalem's leaders made their home in this neighborhood: Itzhak Ben-Zvi (later Israel's second President); Moshe Sharett (later Israel's first Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister); and historian Jacob Klausner.

The most elegant house in the quarter is Beit Yehudayoff, known as Ha'armon (The Palace), erected in 1907. The facade is reminiscent of the 17th century Capitoline Museum in Rome, its walls marble-faced. In this splendid house, the Messiah was to be greeted on his arrival. So far, its stones have witnessed more mundane events. During World War I the Turkish army used the building as its headquarters, and, upon the British victory, the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish community of Jerusalem held a festive reception there for British General Allenby. Today the building, as others in the quarter, is somewhat run-down; it houses two religious schools for girls.

## **The Railroad station**

"An iron monster spitting sparks of fire" – that is how a turn-of-the-century Jerusalemite described the strange phenomenon – the new railroad. The first – and only – railway station in Jerusalem was opened on September 26, 1892. At the time, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the man instrumental in the revival of the Hebrew language, coined a new word – "*rakevet*" – for train. Located near the German Colony, the railway station signaled the beginning of a new era. Its inauguration was an important



occasion, taking place in the presence of the Turkish pasha, the governor of Jerusalem, VIPs from Constantinople and the European consuls in Jerusalem. There was great excitement: A Turkish band played, sheep were slaughtered and their blood sprinkled on the rails for good luck. A rabbi exclaimed that he could hear the Messiah approaching.

The railroad line from Jaffa to Jerusalem was constructed under concession by a French company. Its gauge was narrow (only one meter instead of the customary 1.43 meters), yet it shortened traveling time between the two cities from three days to three hours!

In 1920, the British converted the narrow gauge to the standard 1.43 m, and in 1923 undertook major renovations which enabled the transportation of goods in addition to passengers.

The Jerusalem railway station – a building in the baroque style – was built by the Turkish authorities in the early 1890s. It still stands unchanged. "The station is anachronistic and has lost its original purpose," says Ulrich Plessner, an architect whose plans include bringing part of the rails underground and developing the neighborhood. An additional idea, says Nili Hod, Coordinator of the Committee on the Preservation of Sites at the Jerusalem Municipality, is to turn it into a railroad museum.

## **Sha'arei Tzedek (Gates of Righteousness)**

At the turn of the century, the population of Jerusalem was plagued with malaria, malnutrition, diphtheria, and other diseases, and a Middle Eastern streak of fatalism. Concerned by the situation, German Jews formed a Central Committee for the Construction of a Jewish Hospital in Jerusalem, and in 1890 sent 26-year-old Cologne-born Dr. Moritz (Moshe) Wallach to Jerusalem. The inauguration of Sha'arei Tzedek hospital on January 27, 1902 was a splendid affair, graced by such dignitaries as Jawad Pasha, Turkish governor of Jerusalem, German consul Dr. Schmidt, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Salant and Sephardi Chief Rabbi Haham Bashi Eliashar. The rabbis recited prayers for the sultan and the kaiser.

For 45 years the hospital was not only Dr. Wallach's place of work, but also his home. In fact, because of the good doctor's total identification with the place and its patients, the hospital was called simply "Wallach." Another devoted member of the hospital's team was Schwester Selma, a tiny person and the hospital's only graduate nurse, trained at the Heinrich

Heine Hospital in Hamburg. Like Dr. Wallach, she lived in the hospital, to be more readily available. Dubbed by Time Magazine "something of an angel," Schwester Selma served the hospital as head nurse for 48 years.

The hospital stood on Jaffa Road, on a two-and-a-half acre plot. It was a 20-minute donkey ride away from the Old City, where most Jerusalemites lived. The sick arrived on carts, camels and donkeys, not only from the Old City, but also from other parts of the country.

During World War I, when there was an acute shortage of milk, a cowshed housing 40 cows was built on the hospital premises. And, in 1917, British Major General Shea, commanding the 60th Division, accepted the surrender of the Turkish army in the hospital gardens.

Over the years, Sha'arei Tzedek kept its doors open to rich and poor, Jews and non-Jews treating outbreaks of scarlet fever, meningitis and typhoid despite Arab riots and massacres. During the War of Independence, when Jerusalem was besieged and cut off from the rest of the country, Sha'arei Tzedek took in and cared for 60-80 new patients every day. On the first day of the Six-Day War in 1967, 150 casualties were treated by its doctors and its underground operating theater remained in constant use. The hospital received three direct hits, but miraculously no one was hurt.

By 1978 Sha'arei Tzedek's facilities had become inadequate and the hospital moved to larger premises in the Bayit Vegan neighborhood, equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The hospital, which had boasted 21 beds in 1902, now had 525; and many more patients could now receive medical attention.

The original Sha'arei Tzedek building on Jaffa Road stood empty for almost 20 years, suffering neglect and vandalism. With awareness of its architectural and historic value, it is slated for preservation and is currently being restored. While the new facade is expected to be almost identical to the original, the interior will be redesigned to fit its new function as the home of the Israel Broadcasting Authority.

## **The Laeml School**

Like so many other Jewish institutions in nineteenth-century Jerusalem, the Laeml School began its life in the Old City. Named for philanthropist Simon von Laeml of Vienna, one of the few Austrian Jews to bear a title, and financed by a fund established by his daughter Elisa Herz, the school

opened its doors in 1853. In 1903 it moved to a plot of land to the northwest of the Old City, bought by Ezra, a welfare organization of German Jews.

The large two-story neo-classic building (at the corner of Yeshayahu and David Yellin Streets) has both European and oriental elements and is surrounded by a high stone wall. It was designed by German architect Theodor Sandler. A clock with Hebrew letters as numbers adorned the building.

The school was a trendsetter not only because it was situated outside the walls of the city. It also aroused the ire of the city's traditionalists, since secular as well as religious subjects were taught, in both Hebrew and German; and girls as well as boys attended the school.

Originally meant for girls of Sephardi families, the Laeml School later merged with a co-ed school for Ashkenazi orphans and was run by Ephraim Cohn-Reiss, a Jerusalem-born educator. Once it stood – alone – on top of a hill. Somewhat naively and certainly in vain in view of the expansion the city was experiencing, Cohn-Reiss expressed the wish that his school would remain far from the crowds. "I hope that the school will not become surrounded by houses, and that the noise of the marketplace will not penetrate, for two Jewish quarters have suddenly gone up by the school."

Until World War I, the German and Austrian governments, through their respective consuls in Jerusalem, helped support the school. It was later taken over by the World Zionist Organization and now serves as an educational institution for ultra-orthodox boys. Above the entrance one can still see the original biblical scene which symbolizes the realization of the dream of return to the land of the fathers.

## **The Sundial Building**

Rabbi Shmuel Levi, a Russian Jew living in the United States and active on behalf of immigrants in Jerusalem, built this unusual building, standing on Jaffa Road near the Machane Yehuda Market. In 1908, with money collected in the United States, he built the three-story house; the first two floors served as a hostel for 50 people, while the Tiferet Zion Synagogue occupied the top floor. A wooden porch faced east; from here one could see the sunrise in order to determine the time for morning prayers.

An unusual feature of the building is a sundial on its facade, built by Moshe Shapira, a self-taught astronomer who had made a study of the science according to the writings of Maimonides and the Vilna Gaon. The semicircular sundial is five meters in diameter; above it, for cloudy days, were two mechanical clocks. Shapira also built three sundials on the third floor balcony of the building. The time on the clocks was set by Jerusalem time and not, as was customary in those days, by Cairo time.

Ravaged by fire in 1941, the Sundial Building was partially restored by the municipality in 1980.

## **Arab Building in Jerusalem**

Natural Arab construction was characterized by the fact that it blended harmoniously into the landscape, by its arches and domes and different finishes of stone. Leaving fertile valleys for agricultural development, houses were generally built on the slopes and the hilltops. Certain dictates of Muslim law determine some features: windows were placed in a way that occupants (especially women) cannot be seen by neighbors, and a wall common to two buildings is the property of the owner of the house which stands on higher ground.

Like their Jewish neighbors, Arabs of the Old City began building and moving beyond the walls during the second half of the 19th century. Both Jews and Moslems made the move to the new parts in order to improve their living conditions. While Jewish neighborhoods were invariably composed of a number of homes huddled closely together and around public buildings, Moslem dwellings were free-standing houses for immediate and extended families. Arabs built no public buildings outside the walls.

Affluent Moslem families – the Husseini, Nashashibi, Nusseibeh and Dajani families – were the first Arabs to build outside Jerusalem's walls. While the exteriors of their houses were plain, the interiors were often opulent.

One such house was built from 1865-1876 by Rabah al-Husseini at 26 Nablus Road, in the Sheikh Jerah Quarter; he lived there with his four wives and his servants until his death in the 1890s. Built in the European neo-classical style with many Middle Eastern embellishments, the building is insulated with one-meter-thick walls, and boasts a gilded dome, marble floors and decorated wooden ceilings. In 1894 it became

the home of Horatio and Anna Spafford, who had come to Jerusalem some three years earlier. With the aim of doing humanitarian work, they had formed a commune with some American friends, and were later joined by a group from Sweden. Recently arrived Jewish immigrants from Yemen were among the beneficiaries of their humanitarian work. When they finally settled in the house built by al-Husseini, they established a souvenir shop, along with a farm. They also opened a photo shop near Jaffa Gate which became well known after two of the group accompanied the Jerusalem tour of Kaiser Wilhelm II and photodocumented it.

Today the building is the American Colony Hotel; with its lovely patio and its famous weekend buffet lunches, it is a popular place, particularly with journalists.

Similarly, a number of houses built by the Nashashibis on Ethiopia Street boast large rooms, high ceilings, stylized windows with colored glass and elaborate wooden ceilings. One of these buildings is occupied today by Jerusalem artist Jacob Pins. Built at the turn of the century by the Husseinis, the complex on Shivtei Yisrael (Tribes of Israel) Street houses Lifeline to the Old.

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Source: [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Jerusalem - Binyane Ha'uma Ceramics Workshop

Excerpted by [Hillel Geva](#) from Preliminary Reports\* by  
Haim Goldfus and Benny Arubas

In 1992, remains of a ceramics workshop of the [Tenth Roman Legion](#) were uncovered at Binyane Ha'uma (Jerusalem Convention Center) in western [Jerusalem](#); evidence of its existence had first been noted in excavations carried out between 1949 and 1967.

Located on a hill some 2 km. west of the [Old City](#), the site overlooks the ancient route from the coastal plain via Nahal Sorek to Jerusalem. The remains revealed three distinct periods of occupation: in the [Second Temple](#) period (1st century [BCE](#) to 1st century [CE](#)), there was a small settlement with a pottery workshop; in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, there was a workshop of the Tenth Roman Legion; in the Byzantine period (5th - 6th centuries) a monastery stood on the site. Mentioned in contemporary sources, it was identified as the Monastery of St. George Outside the Walls.

### The Tenth Roman Legion Workshop

The Roman workshop covered a considerable area. In the course of its existence, various ceramic objects were produced, in particular a variety of construction materials. Several production areas with distinct functions were noted:



- An area of large, compacted, flat surfaces on which the clay was prepared. The raw material for the clay was Moza Marl, a light brown soil found in exposures in the Jerusalem area. In the workshop the raw material was sieved and soaked in water. A cistern provided the water required for the production process.
- The building in which the potters worked consisted of several rooms. A small stone potter's wheel was found, and depressions in the floor indicated that a row of such wheels had stood there.
- A large, open area at the sides of the workshop building, which served for drying the clay products before firing.

**Kilns.** The most important finds in the workshop were several pottery kilns, in which the clay products were fired. At first, a row of five kilns had been constructed at the workshop and some time later several new kilns, to replace old ones, were added. The openings in the kilns faced eastward, where the ground was slightly lower, thus facilitating access. The average size of the kilns was 3.5 x 3 m., consisting of a combustion chamber at the bottom and a firing chamber above it. The stone foundations, covered with mud brick, were constructed by cutting in the bedrock that served as the floor of the kilns; these were covered with a vault made of bricks. The ceiling of the combustion chamber, supported by a row of small brick arches, served as the floor of the firing chamber above it. Heat passed upward through this floor via holes. The dried vessels were placed in the firing chamber in several layers, resting on each other. Wood or charcoal was used to heat the combustion chamber and the fire was fanned by the wind or by bellows.

**Vessels and construction materials.** A considerable number of pottery sherds which had broken in the production process, were found scattered over the site. A great variety of vessels for everyday use, some of them decorated, were mould-made in imitation of those widely in use in the Roman Europe at that time. But the main items produced were construction materials, including pipes, large roof tiles (ca. 50 cm. long), square and round bricks for flooring, small pillars for bathhouses and trapezoidal bricks used in the constructed of vaults. These items were made in moulds and stamped with the insignia of the Tenth Legion before firing. Two types of stamps were in use: one was round, with the image of a wild boar and a galley (a type of warship) on either side of the legion's name, abbreviated as L.X.F (Legio X Fretensis); more common was a rectangular stamp with only the name of the legion in a variety of abbreviated forms, such as LEG X FRE. Unusual finds were two clay seals, one with an abbreviation of the Tenth Legion's name, which were used on the clay products.

## Summary

The Tenth Roman Legion, which operated the workshop at Binyane Ha'uma, participated, with other legions, in the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE. After the suppression of the [First Jewish Rebellion](#), its units were stationed in Jerusalem and its camp was in the western part of the city, on the remains of the Upper City of the Second Temple period (today the southern part of the Old City and Mt. Zion). It was in this period that the workshop was established at Binyane Ha'uma, west of the city. Its location was dictated by the availability of the required raw materials, the elevation (for wind necessary for the efficient operation of the kilns) and its proximity to the main road to Jerusalem for transporting the finished products.

Demand for products of the Legion's workshop undoubtedly increased during the building of Aelia Capitolina, which was founded by the emperor Hadrian in 135 CE, on the ruins of Jewish Jerusalem of the Second Temple period. Building materials produced at the Binyane Ha'uma workshop were used in constructing public buildings in the city and excavations in Jerusalem and its environs indeed yielded a large number of products from the Tenth Legion's workshop. The workshop at Binyane Ha'uma was operative during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. It was abandoned when the Tenth Legion was withdrawn from Jerusalem at the end of the 3rd century.

This is the only workshop discovered to date in the eastern part of the Roman Empire; similar workshops of Roman military units are known in Europe, in the western part of the Roman Empire.

Some of the kilns of the workshop have been restored and are today displayed in the basement of Binyane Ha'uma, the Jerusalem Convention Center.

*The site was excavated by H. Goldfus and B. Arubas on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.*

*Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of Ancient Jerusalem Revealed.*

\*1) Arubas, B., Goldfus, H. 1995: 'The Kilnworks of the Tenth legion Fretensis', The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research (=Journal of Roman Archaeology Suppl. # 14) Ann Arbor, MI. Pp. 95-107, 273.

2) Goldfus, H., Arubas, B. 2002: 'The Kilnworks of the Tenth Legion at the Jerusalem Convention Center', Qadmoniot 122/2, 111-119 (Hebrew).

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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## Jerusalem — Burial Sites and Tombs of the Second Temple Period

The large number of burial sites and tombs in [Jerusalem](#) dating from the Second Temple period (second century BCE - first century CE) have been the subject of intensive and continuing investigation. Hundreds of tombs, elaborate and simple, were hewn into the slopes of the hills surrounding the city, mainly on the [Mount of Olives](#) and [Mount Scopus](#).

The burial caves were in continuous use for several generations by members of the same family. Simple tombs have a narrow opening, sealed with a square stone. Several dozen particularly large tombs have splendid facades, decorated with columns topped by gables with floral motifs. In primary burial, bodies were placed in niches (*kuhim*) or on benches (*arcosolia*) cut into the walls of the burial chambers. The most typical feature of the Jewish tombs of that period are the stone chests with lids (*ossuaries*). Thousands of these have been found in Jerusalem, some decorated and bearing inscriptions. They attest to the prevalent practice of collecting the bones of the deceased for secondary burial, a custom based on the Jewish belief in the resurrection of the dead. Following are descriptions of some of the more important tombs.

There are three famous tombs in the Kidron Valley:

1. **Yad Avshalom** (monument to Absalom, traditionally ascribed to the rebellious son of [King David](#)), is the most complete funerary monument dating to the Second Temple period. The 20 m.- high monument is composed of a lower rock-cut square structure containing a small burial chamber. Its four outer sides are

decorated with Ionic columns supporting a Doric frieze. The upper part of the monument is round and built of stones supporting a concave conical roof. The monument was probably intended to serve as *nefesh* (memorial) for the adjacent cave of Jehoshaphat (King of Judah, for whom this part of the Kidron Valley is named); it contains eight burial chambers and has an elaborate facade decorated with a relief of vine leaves and bunches of grapes.

2. **The Tomb of Zechariah** (by tradition the Prophet Zechariah or, by another tradition, the father of John the Baptist) is a monolithic monument cut from the surrounding rock. It is a square structure of 5 x 5 m., decorated with Ionic columns and crowned by a pyramid. It probably served as *nefesh* for the tomb below it.
3. **The Tomb of Benei Hezir** is characterized by its free-standing facade with two Doric columns, all cut into the rock. It has a long Hebrew inscription carved on the architrave above the columns, identifying it as the tomb and *nefesh* of several members of the Hezir family who had served as priests in the Temple and were buried in the rock-hewn tomb below. The name appears in the Priestly Roster of the First Temple: ...*the seventeenth to Hezir* (1 Chronicles 24:15) and again among the priests serving in the Second Temple. (Nehemiah 10:20)
4. **The Tomb of Queen Helene of Adiabene**, the largest tomb in Jerusalem, is located north of the Old City. It has a long, wide staircase leading down to a large courtyard (27 x 26 m.), all cut into the rock below the surrounding surface area. The facade of the tomb itself has two Ionic columns supporting an architrave adorned with carved leaves, and above it, a frieze decorated with a bunch of grapes and acanthus leaves. The entrance to the burial cave, which contains several chambers, is blocked with a large rolling stone. One of the decorated sarcophagi bears the inscription "Queen Tseddan." The tomb is ascribed to Helene, Queen of Adiabene (in the north of modern Iraq), who converted to Judaism in the first century CE and built a palace in Jerusalem. According to [Josephus Flavius](#) (*Antiquities of the Jews* 20: 95; *The Jewish War* 5: 55, 119, 147) she died in Adiabene but her remains and those of some family members were transferred for burial in the mausoleum she had built for her family in Jerusalem.
5. **The Tomb of Jason**, in the Rehavia neighborhood, consists of a

courtyard and a single Doric column (instead of the usual two) decorating the porch at the entrance to the burial chamber, above which a pyramid was built. Several naval vessels were drawn in charcoal on the walls of the porch and among a number of inscriptions in Greek and Aramaic, one laments the deceased Jason: "A powerful lament make for Jason, son of P.....(my brother) peace ..... who hast built thyself a tomb, Elder rest in peace."

6. **The Tombs of the Sanhedrin** are located northwest of the Old City, in the neighborhood still called Sanhedria. Above the entrance is a gable with fruit among stylized acanthus leaves. The large burial cave contains several dozen burial niches, roughly the number of the members of the Sanhedrin (120), from which the tombs' popular name derives.
7. **The Funerary Inscription of King Uzziah** was found in the collection of the Russian Convent on the Mount of Olives, but there is no record of the place from which it was removed. The Aramaic inscription is incised on a stone tablet (35 x 34 cm.) and the style of the script dates it to the latter part of the Second Temple period. It tells of the reburial of the remains of Uzziah, King of Judah (769 - 733 BCE):

Hither were brought  
the bones of Uzziah  
King of Judah  
and do not open

The Bible recounts King Uzziah's deeds and conquests and also describes his burial: *Uzziah rested with his fathers in the burial field of the kings, because, they said, he is a leper.* (2 Chronicles 26:3)

King Uzziah was obviously not buried in the royal tombs within the City of David. Josephus wrote (*Antiquities of the Jews* 9:10,4) that "he was buried alone in his garden". The necessity to remove the bones of Uzziah from their original burial place was probably connected with the expansion of the city during Herod's reign.

8. **The Tomb of Simon the Temple Builder** is a simple tomb located north of the Old City. One of the ossuaries found in the



tomb bears an inscription in Aramaic which reads "Simon the Temple Builder." The ossuary presumably contains the remains of a man who participated in the building of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. It seems that this was a source for pride, which he wanted recorded for posterity.

Among the bones stored in another ossuary were two heel bones pierced by a large iron nail, indicating crucifixion. This rare find was widely publicized and is of particular interest in view of the New Testament description of the crucifixion of Jesus.

9. **The Tomb of Abba** was uncovered north of the Old City. On the wall above the repository is an Aramaic inscription in ancient Hebrew letters (very unusual in the Second Temple period) which reads:

I, Abba, son of the priest  
Eleaz(ar), son of Aaron the high (priest),  
I, Abba, the oppressed  
and the persecuted (?),  
who was born in Jerusalem,  
and went into exile into Babylonia  
and brought (back to Jerusalem) Mattathi(ah),  
son of Jud(ah), and buried him in a  
cave which I bought by deed.

This intriguing inscription caused much speculation as to the identity of the person buried here. One theory is that the remains in the decorated ossuary are those of the last king of the Hasmonean dynasty, Mattathias Antigonus who, in an attempt to restore the former independence of the Hasmoneans, had sought the help of the Partians. He was defeated and killed by the Romans in 37 BCE.

10. **The Cave of Jehosef Son of Caiphas** is a small tomb located south of Jerusalem. The most elaborate of the ossuaries in it bears the Hebrew inscription "Jehosef bar [son of] Caifa [Caiphas]." The name Caifa appears here for the first time in Hebrew and in an archeological context. It was a nickname, as related by Josephus Flavius: "Joseph who is called Caiaphas" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 23: 35, 39) It is also the name of the High Priest mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 26: 3, 57) from whose house in Jerusalem Jesus was delivered to the Roman procurator Pontius

## Pilatus who ordered his crucifixion.

Tomb No. 5 was excavated by I.Y. Rahmani; tombs Nos. 8 and 9 by V. Tzaferis and tomb No. 10 by Z. Greenhut, all on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The rest of the tombs are above ground, or were scientifically published decades ago.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#).

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## JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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# Jerusalem: Christian Architecture through the Ages

By Yishai Eldar

A survey of historic Christian architecture in [Jerusalem](#) is a study of continuity and survival despite the ravages of time, war, schism, earthquake and fire. It is also a study of the continuing influence of custom and established tradition on style, design and ornamentation.

Many of the churches, monasteries, convents and shrines mark sites associated with the earliest years of Christianity and the life and ministry of Jesus and his disciples. Even in later centuries, the design of these buildings was influenced as much by the religious traditions of the individual Christian community as by the building methods and styles current at the time of construction. Differences in tradition also affected the design of the sanctuaries. Simply stated, the Western churches tended to have an open, high altar; whereas the Eastern churches placed the altar behind an iconostasis, a wall separating the sanctuary from the main body of the church.

Building in [Jerusalem](#) also made repeated re-use of older stone work and architectural elements. Herodian- and even Hasmonean-cut stones can be found in buildings of the [Byzantine](#), early-[Islamic](#) and [Crusader](#) periods; and a stone-carved rosette window from a Crusader church is incorporated in the 16th century [Ottoman](#) fountain opposite the Bab al-Silsila (Gate of the Chain) entrance to the Haram esh-Sharif (the temple Mount).

The earliest buildings used by Christians as places of residence and

worship in [Jerusalem](#) were probably constructed in the contemporary Herodian and Roman styles. While no identifiable Christian structure survives from either of these periods, a sense of the architectural character of the surroundings in which Jesus and his disciples lived can be seen in the ruins of two buildings in [Jerusalem](#) destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE: the Burnt House in the Jewish Quarter, and the barrel-vaulted rooms found during archeological excavations at the Armenian Orthodox Church of the Holy Saviour on Mount Zion.

## **Roman - Byzantine Period (70 - 638)**

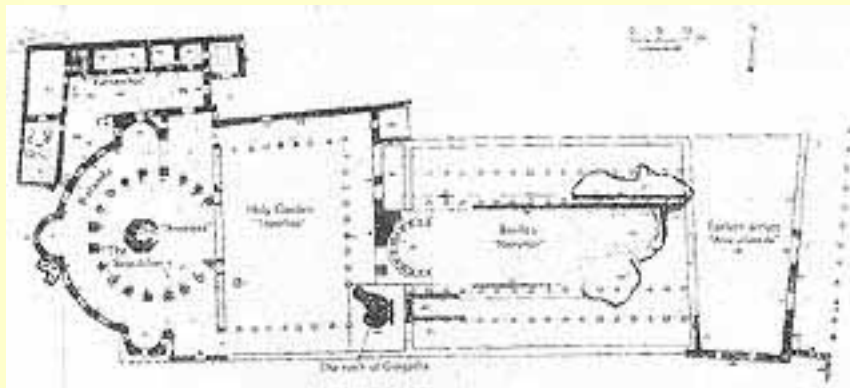
Almost all early Christian architects borrowed heavily from the [Romans](#), whatever the regional culture of the individual community. The principal feature of Roman architecture was the arch and the vault in domed roof construction. The Byzantines further developed this in the construction of great domed buildings, such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

The basic design in early church construction was the basilica, the large, usually rectangular public halls used by the Romans for public meetings. Entrance to such churches was often through a large, colonaded courtyard, called atrium, and a vestibule, called *narthex*. The church itself was built in the shape of a "T". The vertical consisting of a nave, usually flanked by two or more side-aisles. A recessed, semi-circular, half-domed apse (usually at the eastern end of the church) contained the main altar. Such churches sometimes had the addition of two transepts, forming the arms of the "T".

This design was employed in the construction of the 4th century Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was originally composed of five basic elements: a Rotunda over the place of the Tomb; a chapel built on Golgotha, the place of the Cross; a Courtyard; a great, five-aisled Basilica, with apse and altar at the western end, toward the Tomb; and an Atrium at the eastern entrance to the Basilica from the Cardo Maximus, the colonaded main street that ran south from the present Damascus Gate. (A partially restored section of the Byzantine extension of the Cardo can be seen in the Jewish Quarter.)

A visit to the present Church of the Holy Sepulcher reveals little of the original Byzantine structure. The church was burned and looted by the Persians in 614, partially rebuilt by the Patriarch Modestos, damaged by earthquake in 808, and destroyed in 1009 by order of the Fatamid Caliph al-Hakim. A portion of the Church was again rebuilt by the Byzantine

Emperor Constantine Monomachus in 1048, but most of the present building is the result of 12th century Crusader enlargement and reconstruction, as well as later renovations (the most recent preservation work was begun in 1959). The Crusader architects incorporated what survived of the original Byzantine fabric in the area of the Rotunda, Golgotha and the Courtyard into their church. (The present columns and piers of the Rotunda replicate the approximate shape and design of the 4th century original, but at half the height.) The Basilica and Atrium were never rebuilt. However, a portion of the eastern entrance from the Cardo Maximus can be seen in the nearby Russian Orthodox Hospice on al-Dabbaghin Street.



### Reconstruction of the original Byzantine Church

Since the Crusades, the precincts and fabric of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher have come into the possession of the three major denominations - the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox and the Latin Roman Catholics - whose rights of possession and use are protected by the Status Quo of the Holy Places, as guaranteed by Article LXII of the Treaty of Berlin (1878). The various chapels and shrines within the building are furnished and decorated according to the customs and rites of the religious community holding possession.

The Egyptian Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox also possess certain rights and small properties within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Coptic Chapel on the western side of the edicule enshrines a fragment of stone molding from an earlier monument, which can be seen beneath the altar. The Syrian Orthodox have a chapel on the west side of the Rotunda in which a portion of the original 4th century outer wall can be seen. The Ethiopian Orthodox have a monastery on the roof of the Armenian Chapel of St. Helena, amid the ruins of a 12th century Crusader cloister and refectory.

A common and recognizable Byzantine building technique was the use of alternating courses of stone and brick in the construction of walls. This can be seen at various places in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher: in the Greek Orthodox Chapel of Adam beneath Golgotha, and in the support piers for the 11th century Arch of the Emperor between the rotunda and the Greek catholicon. The visitor should also note the Crusader re-use of Byzantine "basket-weave" capitals.

The oldest surviving church building in [Jerusalem](#) is the 5th century crypt of the Greek Orthodox Church of St. John the Baptist (Prodromos) in the Christian Quarter of the Old City. Now below street level, the structure is trefoil-shaped, with three apses (on the north, east and south), and a narrow, long narthex on the western side. Four piers support the dome. The upper storey was destroyed by the Persians in 614. It was rebuilt by St. John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria, and later, in the 11th century, by Italian merchants from Amalfi. The present facade and small bell tower of the upper storey are modern. The church is reached through a courtyard from the Christian Quarter Road.

Another important architectural ruin from the Byzantine period is the apse and foundation walls of the monumental Nea Church, the "New Church of St. Mary, Mother of God" built by the Emperor Justinian in 543. These were uncovered in 1970 and 1982 during archeological excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Little of the superstructure of the building was found, but one of the large underground cisterns can still be seen.

The Golden Gate in the eastern wall of the Old City may also date from the Byzantine period. There are references to a gate in the eastern wall of the Temple Mount during the Second Temple period, used by the priests in the biblical Ceremony of the Red Heifer; according to a later Christian tradition, this was the gate through which Jesus entered the city on Palm Sunday. The rounded arches with floral relief moldings are very similar to the Herodian double gate on the south side of the Temple Mount, and archeological investigations carried out during the British Mandate suggested that the present structure could be situated on the site of the original Herodian gateway. It is possible that the present gate was built in the mid-5th century by the Empress Eudocia to commemorate St. Peter's miraculous cure of the lame man (Acts 3:1-10).

## **Romanesque Architecture (500 - 1100)**

A transitional style of architecture called Romanesque developed during



the 6th century; it incorporates the earlier Basilica style and some elements of the later more complex Gothic style. A parallel development occurred in Armenia.

The finest examples of surviving Romanesque architecture in [Jerusalem](#) are the 11th century church of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Holy Cross, located near the Israel Museum, and the restored 12th century Church of St. Anne, near the Lions Gate in the Old City.

The fortress-like Monastery of the Holy Cross was built in the 11th century by the Georgian King Bagrat on the site of an earlier sanctuary. The church, entered through a narthex, has a nave and side aisles, with a dome supported by four pillars. The 12th and 17th century frescoes decorating the pillars and walls of the church recount the legend of the tree used to make the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. One of the frescoes commemorates the 13th century Georgian national poet Shota Rustaveli, who lived in the monastery. Since the 16th century, the monastery has been in the possession of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. It is open to visitors most days of the week. The floor contains sections of mosaic flooring from an earlier 5th century church.

The Church of St. Anne, a domed basilica with a nave and two aisles, is considered one of the most beautiful churches in the city. The interior is plain, perhaps attesting to the fact that after 1192 the building was used as a madrasa, a Muslim religious academy. (It is curious that none of the capitals on the interior columns are of the same design. One even portrays a cow - or an ox, a symbol perhaps for St. Luke?) In 1856, the Ottoman sultan gave the property to the Roman Catholic "White Fathers" in gratitude for French support during the Crimean War.

The walled Armenian Quarter (actually the Armenian Convent of Saint James) in the southwestern part of the Old City contains several churches and chapels dating from the Middle Ages. The most imposing is the Armenian Orthodox Cathedral of St. James the Great, acquired from the Georgians in 1141. The present structure incorporates earlier elements, including the Chapel of St. Menas, which may date from the 5th century. The interior design of the cathedral - a wide nave and narrow aisles, separated by four square pillars supporting vaulting and a dome - is similar to already existing churches in Armenia. The original entrance was on the south side of the church, but in 1670 the portico was closed in to create the Chapel of Etchmiadzin.

The nearby Armenian Orthodox Church of the Holy Archangels, dating from the 13th century, is similar in plan to St. James, though on a much smaller scale. Both churches are decorated with 18th century blue-on-white Kütahya tiles. The walls of the entrance courtyard to the cathedral also contain katchkars, stones carved with crosses and inscriptions that were donated by pilgrims. The earliest is dated 1151.

A well-preserved Crusader church was discovered only a few years ago on Aqabat al-Khalidiyya Street near the Suq al-Qattanin (Market of the Cotton Merchants). It is presumed that this is the Church of St. Julian, though this is uncertain. Like several other religious Crusader buildings, it was later put to other uses; most recently it has been used as a carpentry and furniture shop. A three-aisled basilica with three apses, the plan is similar to that of St. Mary of the Germans, a 12th century church and hospice of the German-speaking Knights of St. John, the preserved ruins of which can be seen on Misgav Ladakh Street in the Jewish Quarter.

Other Romanesque and Crusader churches have survived as mosques and Muslim religious and educational institutions, but these are not open to casual visitors.

The outline of the 11th century Church of St. Mary of the Latins is preserved in the present German Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, built in 1898. The present building also incorporates the medieval north porch with its decorations of the Zodiac. Parts of the medieval cloister are preserved in the adjoining Lutheran Hospice.

Not all Crusader architecture was for religious purposes. The Triple Suq - the three parallel covered market bazaars in the center of the Old City - is mostly from the Crusader period. Some of the piers between the shops still bear the cipher "S. A." for "Santa Anna" signifying that they were the property of the Church of St. Anne.

The Great Greek Orthodox Monastery, which adjoins the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on the west, should also be mentioned. The monastery is a labyrinth of rooms, courtyards, chapels, steps and lanes from various periods. Its main Church of St. Thecla dates from the 12th century, but the monastery itself may be older. The flat roof of the monastery overspans Christian Quarter Road and extends to join the roof of the Holy Sepulcher.

## **Gothic Architecture (1100 - 1500)**

The Gothic style of architecture developed from the Romanesque during the 12th century. It is distinguished by a predominance of vertical lines, the use of "broken" (or pointed) arches, clustered columns, and large decorated windows. Gothic architecture also used intricate and richly developed stone-carving, including fanciful or grotesque designs.

For historical, political as well as financial reasons, late-Medieval Christian architecture in [Jerusalem](#) did not develop into the soaring architectural styles found in the Gothic cathedrals and churches of Western Europe. Even so, elements of early-Norman Gothic can be found in the Crusader-built choir and ambulatory of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (in and around the present Greek Orthodox catholicon); in the groined, ribbed-vaulting of the south transept; and in the two pointed, depressed-arch portals of the main entrance, with their distinctive columned door jambs and ornamental arch moldings. (The two 12th century Gothic lintels with intricately carved scroll-work and figures that once adorned the doorways are now in [Jerusalem's](#) Rockefeller Museum.)

Similar 12th century depressed-arch portals can be found in the entrance to the small Syrian Orthodox Church of St. Mark, near the Jaffa Gate; and in the buttressed Crusader facade for the underground Tomb of the Virgin Mary in the Kidron Valley.

Following the Muslim re-conquest, there was little new construction of Christian religious buildings. The work that was carried out or permitted was mostly repair and maintenance. One notable exception was the Coenaculum, the Upper Room, on Mount Zion, built by the Franciscans on their return to the city in 1335. The ribbed vaulting of the ceiling is typical of Lusignan or Cypriot Gothic. The sculpted mihrab, the Muslim prayer niche, was added in 1523, when the Franciscans were expelled from the building and the room converted into a mosque.

## 19th century Pastiche

Until 1833, the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land was the only Western Christian representation permitted to reside in [Jerusalem](#). This changed during the ten-year military occupation of the city by Ibrahim Pasha, son of the ruler of Egypt, Mohammed Ali, when the major European powers established consulates in the city. Ottoman political and administrative control was restored in 1844, but the major European powers now regarded themselves as protectors of the local Christian communities: France as protector of the Roman Catholics; Russia as

protector of the Eastern Orthodox; and Great Britain and Prussia as protectors of the Protestant communities. The national churches of Great Britain and Prussia took advantage of the situation to establish a Protestant presence. Similar activities were carried out by the Russian Orthodox Church and by the Catholic churches and religious orders of Austria, France, and Italy.

As a rule, these groups tended to favor architectural designs expressing their own national culture and history. The result has graced [Jerusalem](#) with an English country cathedral, an Italian Renaissance palazzo, a Rhine Valley hunting lodge, and a Scottish castle. Some of the builders attempted to achieve a more indigenous effect by including "Moorish" and neo-classical elements in their designs. Some of these attempts were more successful than others. All the designs, however, had to contend with local materials and traditional building methods. For their part, the indigenous Eastern Churches continued to use traditional designs. An example of this is the Coptic Khan on the northern side of Hezekiah's Pool. Built in 1836 as a hospice for Egyptian Christian pilgrims, it has the classic layout of a medieval caravanserai with an entrance gateway and a central courtyard.

The first Western ecclesiastical building constructed in [Jerusalem](#) at this time was the Anglican Christ Church compound inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. Built in 1849 and designed in mock-Tudor style, it is the first and oldest Protestant church in the Middle East. It lacks a bell tower because it was fictiously built as a private chapel for the British consul-general.

A similar image of "merrie England" is found in the Anglican Cathedral of St. George the Martyr on Nablus Road, constructed in 1898. A scaled-down version of a rural English cathedral, it could easily be a stage set for one of Trollope's novels. Entered through a mock-Tudor gatehouse, the Cathedral Close includes apartments for the dean and bishop, a guesthouse for pilgrims, a school for boys, and in recent years an adult education college run by the affiliated Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States.

In 1852, the Roman Catholics began to build the Latin Patriarchate, following the restoration of that dignity in 1847. The actual residence was completed in 1858, the con-cathedral in 1872. The rather plain facade is neo-gothic.

Greek Orthodox building at this time tended to favor the Ottoman-

Baroque, as can be seen in the facade of the Greek Orthodox School on St. Dimitri Street, and in the design of the bell tower in the Monastery of the Cross.

A sort of northern-Baroque style was favored in the construction of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, consecrated in 1871 within the walled Russian Compound. Built outside the Old City, the complex of buildings included a consulate, hospital, hospices and kitchens for Russian Orthodox pilgrims. A more traditional "Muscovite" style was used in the onion-domed design of the Russian Orthodox Church and Convent of St. Mary Magdalene at Gethsemane, built in 1888.

One of the more curious buildings is the Florentine-style Italian Hospital (which today houses offices of the Ministry of Education) on the Street of the Prophets. A startling apparition, it combines elements from the Palazzo Vecchio and the Medici Chapel.

A plainer neo-Renaissance look is found in the Franciscan-built Terra Sancta College building on King George Avenue, and the older Ratisbonne Monastery of the Fathers of Zion.

The Germans preferred the neo-Romanesque, of which there are four imposing examples: the German Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Muristan section of the Old City, built in 1897; the Roman Catholic Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion, built in 1901; the Roman Catholic St. Paul's Hospice across from the Damascus Gate, built in 1910 (which today houses Schmidt College); and the German Lutheran Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, also built in 1910 as part of the Augusta-Victoria Hospice. The interior decoration, frescoes and mosaics of the Church of the Ascension are important to students of 19th century German art, as they are patterned after those of the Kaiser Wilhelm I Memorial Church in Berlin, which was destroyed during World War II. Similarly important late 19th-century decorations were used in the chapel of the Roman Catholic Austrian Hospice across from the 4th Station of the Cross on the Via Dolorosa.

One of the most successful of the Western architects working in [Jerusalem](#) during the mid-19th century was the German-born engineer and pioneering biblical archeologist Dr. Conrad Schick, whose design for St. Paul's Anglican Chapel on the street of the Prophets is a gem of Victorian "gingerbread", even though constructed of local limestone. (A similar use of stone to build Northern European-style houses is found in the German



Colony, in the Emek Refaim neighborhood south of the [Jerusalem](#) Railroad Station.)

Several buildings constructed at this time sought to incorporate designs adapted from recent archeological finds. Such designs can be seen in the ornamentation on the French Hospital and the Convent of St. Vincent de Paul. However, in the case of the Convent of the Sisters of Zion, archeology became the architectural center of focus following the discovery in 1851 of a portion of what seems to be a 1st century city gate built by Herod Agrippa I, and later rebuilt as a Roman triumphal arch during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (about the year 135). When the present convent was built in 1868, the recently discovered eastern arch of the monument was incorporated into the design of the chapel of the convent as a dramatic setting for the altar.

[Archaeology](#) also influenced the design of St. Stephen's Church, built in 1900 by the French Dominicans as part of the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française. The design is patterned on that of a classical basilica and, indeed the present structure is built on the site of an earlier Byzantine sanctuary. Remnants of the 5th century mosaic paving can be seen in the atrium and in the nave of the sanctuary.

That 19th century European architecture in [Jerusalem](#) could be functional as well as decorative is evidenced by Conrad Schick's own residence, Thabor House on the Street of the Prophets. Built in 1882, it today houses the Swedish Theological Institute. One of the first modern dwellings outside the Old City, it was built by traditional building methods, including rubble-filled walls (as was discovered during recent renovations), but the rooms in the main house have flat European ceilings. Other historic 19th century buildings along the Street of the Prophets are the tin-cupolaed roof of the former German Deaconess Hospital (today an annex to the adjoining Bikur Holim Hospital), and the semi-circular radiating pavilions of the former English Hospital (today the Anglican School).

Nearby, on Ethiopia Street, is the walled compound of the Ethiopian Cathedral and Monastery built in 1896. The church is built in the round. The screened sanctuary is in the center of the building, encircled by an ambulatory where the congregation stands.

## Modern Architecture



The most distinctive architectural feature of modern [Jerusalem](#) is the fact that all buildings are faced in stone - even the public toilets! This is the result of an aesthetic decision made in the early 1920s by the first British governor of [Jerusalem](#), Sir Ronald Storrs, who made it a city ordinance.

The result has given the city a certain uniformity of character. And though there can be startling incongruities between design and material, the requirement has, for the most part, tended to have a moderating effect on more radical designs.

[Jerusalem](#) has three examples of the work of the Roman Catholic architect Antonio Barluzzi, who created a series of churches and shrines for the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land:

- the ornate Church of All Nations at the Garden of Gethsemane, built in 1924;
- a Romanesque-style church tower designed for the Franciscan church at Bethphage during renovations in 1954;
- and the small Chapel of Dominus Fleuit on the Mount of Olives, built in 1955.

A radical departure from his usual conservative style, Barluzzi designed the chapel as a stylized tear-shaped building built in the form of a Greek cross.

The clean, plain lines of St. Andrews Scots Memorial Church and Hospice standing on the edge of the Valley of Hinnom, evoke images of a Highland castle and keep. This is appropriate since the church was built as a memorial to Scottish soldiers who fell fighting in this region during World War I.

The church was built in 1927 to the design of Clifford Holliday. The large, Crusader-style windows in the sanctuary use small, round panels of blue Hebron glass.

More eclectic is the lofty [Jerusalem](#) International YMCA. Opened in 1933, it was designed by A. L. Harmon, the architect of the Empire State Building.

The archangel, in bas relief, on the carillon tower was designed by the Bezalel artist Ze'ev Raban. The capitals along the loggia are carved with representations of local flora and fauna, as are the capitals along the

arcades leading to each of the two domed extensions, one of which contains the Byzantine-ornamented auditorium, the other the gymnasium.

Very modern are the clean lines and comfortable functionalism of the new sanctuary of the Narkis Street Baptist Congregation, a design that blends well with the "Bauhaus" international style of the surrounding neighborhood.

An equally modernistic approach was used in the design of the [Jerusalem](#) Center of Middle Eastern Studies, built in 1988 as a branch of the Mormon Church affiliated Brigham Young University. Situated on the southern slope of Mount Scopus, its architecture takes advantage of situation and view, especially in the glass-walled concert hall, where the audience looks out onto the Old City and the Temple Mount.

The Eastern churches, however, have continued to follow traditional designs, especially in the construction of new churches.

An example of this can be seen in the recently constructed Greek Orthodox Church of Bethphage, which is classically Byzantine.

It is perhaps appropriate for the new Millenium that the most recent work of Christian construction in [Jerusalem](#) has involved the renovation and restoration of the dome of the Rotunda in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The first shall be last and the last shall be first, as it were.

Yishai Eldar is the former editor of *Christian Life in Israel*

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Jerusalem: Elaborate Buildings of the Mamluk Period

The Kurdish general Salah al-Din (Saladin), who gained control of Egypt in 1169 (also famed for his defeat of the [Crusaders](#) at the Horns of Hittin in 1187), followed the [Muslim](#) military tradition of including a slave corps in his army. The practice was continued by his successor Al-Malik, who was the largest purchaser of slaves, mainly Turkish. Upon his death in 1249, the [Mamluk](#) (Arab., slaves) generals managed to establish their own dynasty, which ruled over Egypt and Syria until 1517.

[Jerusalem](#) declined in political and economic importance during the [Mamluk period](#), and its population decreased. For much of this period the city remained unfortified, with the exception of the Tower of David, the seat of the Mamluk governor of the city.

However, Jerusalem became the most important religious center of the Mamluk Sultanate, underwent an intensive process of Islamization and became the focus of Muslim pilgrimage. The [Mamluk period](#) imprinted a Muslim architectural character on the city: many buildings with religious functions were constructed by the Mamluk administrators, local Muslim leaders, and wealthy pilgrims who settled there. These buildings, primarily madrasas for Islamic studies, *ribats*, intended as monasteries but primarily used as hostels for pilgrims, and elegantly designed burial structures were built along the streets to the west and north of the [Temple Mount](#) (*Haram esh-Sharif*), where the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque are located. Extensive building activity also took place on the Temple Mount itself, including the western portico, archways, prayer platforms and fountains.

In the city, new mosques were built and new minarets added to existing ones. Buildings of a secular nature included bathhouses and a market, and the ancient aqueduct that carried water from Solomon's pools beyond Bethlehem to the city was restored.

A number of architectural styles of the past are distinguishable in Jerusalem today, such as the legacy of the Early Arab period on the Temple Mount and Christian edifices from the [Crusader period](#), but the massive construction work of the Mamluks in the 14th and 15th centuries established the Muslim character of the city. Many of these buildings have remained intact to this day and, though worse for neglect, still retain a past splendor, and the numerous tall minarets dominate the skyline.

The Mamluk buildings of Jerusalem have elaborate façades on which most of the decorative elements were concentrated. The entrances are recessed in the façade, with high stone benches on either side. Some of the characteristic decorative elements of the Mamluk period are:

*Mukarnas* - graduated, three-dimensional stone stalactites in the half-dome above the entrance.

*Ablak* - striped masonry. Courses of the beautiful cream-colored local limestone are alternated with courses of differently colored stone, usually red, but also black and yellow.

*Klebo* - interlacing stones in different colors, carved in a variety of profiles and laid in intertwining, puzzle-like fashion.

Inscriptions, in elegant Arabic script, include quotations from the [Kur'an](#), but also the name of the builder and the date of construction.

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## Jerusalem — The Herodian Street Along the Western Wall

At the end of the 1st century BCE King Herod rebuilt the [Second Temple](#) and made it into an edifice of great splendor. It was destroyed in the year 70 CE when the Roman legions under Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian, crushed the five-year-long revolt of the Jews against Rome and conquered [Jerusalem](#). The foundations of the massive retaining walls built by Herod to create the podium on which the [Temple](#) stood, are visible to this day; the best known section is the [Western Wall](#), the venerated remnant of the [Temple](#) where Jews pray to this day.

Excavations were begun during the 1970s along the southwestern corner of the Herodian Temple Mount enclosure. Remains of structures from many periods, covering 2,000 years of history, were uncovered above the destruction layer from the Second Temple period.

From 1993 to 1997, new excavations were conducted between the [Western Wall](#) and the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount. After removing the debris of later periods, the Herodian street running along the western wall of the Temple Mount was exposed in its full length. It followed the course of the Tyropoeon Valley between the Temple Mount and the western hill, where the Upper City, the quarter of the well-to-do in the Herodian period, was located (today's Jewish and Armenian quarters within the Old City wall and Mt. Zion south of the wall).

The street was uncovered for a total length of 70 m. It is about 10 m. wide, paved with large (3 x 1.5 m), very thick stones, carefully trimmed and joined together for comfortable walking. On both sides the street is bounded with elevated curbstones and beneath it is an impressive network of drains, the lowest of them covered with stone vaults, high enough to walk in. Between the street and the western wall of the Temple Mount, a row of small shops which opened onto the street was found; evidence of the commerce that once took place here is provided by the many stone weights of different sizes which were found in this area.

The base of a massive arch protrudes from the western wall, some 12 meters north of the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount enclosure. This is known as Robinson's Arch (after the American explorer who identified it in the mid-19th century as part of the Herodian construction). Opposite it, some 13 meters from the western wall, the remains of a pier which supported the other end of Robinson's Arch were exposed. The pier is constructed of large ashlar, similar to those of the Herodian walls of the Temple Mount. It contains four cells, like those in the row of shops on the opposite side of the street.

South of the pier, the foundations of a row of vaults which gradually rise from south to north were exposed. This row of vaults and Robinson's Arch, which is at right angles to it, supported a huge staircase which connected the street in the valley with the Temple Mount, just as described by Josephus Flavius. (Antiquities XV, 410-415)

The street was found covered with an accumulation of large stones which had been knocked down from the western retaining wall of the Temple Mount, destroying the shops and damaging the pavement. Among the hundreds of stones weighing several tons each, architectural fragments were found which make it possible to reconstruct the staircase of Robinson's Arch and the upper part of the Temple Mount retaining wall. There are stones with projections from the rows of pilasters which protruded from the upper part of the enclosure wall; and a lintel, apparently part of the gate through which people entered the Temple Mount. Other stones with narrow, rounded upper edges served as coping of the balustrade on top of the Temple Mount enclosure wall.

A large corner stone with a typical Herodian profile had been found during the 1970s, lying in the street below the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount. On this stone a Hebrew inscription, partially preserved, is carved: *To the trumpeting place to...* The most likely reconstruction of the missing ending of the inscription is "proclaim" or "separate."

The stone had stood at the top of southwestern corner of the Temple Mount, from where the Temple priests announced the onset of the Sabbath (on Friday evenings).

The great piles of fallen stones provide dramatic evidence of the destruction wrought by the Roman legions in Jerusalem in the year 70 CE., which Josephus Flavius described in great detail.

Some of the stones which covered the street were removed and the site was opened to visitors, who can walk on the original pavement of this street from the Second Temple period and follow in the footsteps of the throngs of pilgrims who walked here 2000 years ago on their way to participate in the rituals on the Temple Mount.

The excavations during the 1970s were conducted by B. Mazar on behalf of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. The later excavations were directed by R. Reich and Y. Billig on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority

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## Jerusalem — The Nea Church and the Cardo

During the [Byzantine period](#) (4th-7th centuries) [Jerusalem](#) was a Christian city with many churches. The most important church was the [Holy Sepulcher](#), on the traditional site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, built by Constantine the Great at the beginning of the fourth century. Another large church was the impressive Nea Church, built by the emperor Justinian at the height of the Christian era of [Jerusalem](#) in the mid-sixth century. Thousands of Christian pilgrims came to Jerusalem to worship and they left many written descriptions of the city and its holy places. But the most important testimony of Byzantine [Jerusalem](#) is the famed Madaba map, made of colored mosaic, part of the floor of a church (in present-day Jordan) which was built at the end of the 6th century.

The map, a beautiful bird's-eye-view of [Jerusalem](#), shows in detail the walls, the gates, the main streets and the churches of the city. The main thoroughfare, the *Cardo maximus* (Cardo, in short) was a colonnaded street bisecting the city from north to south, from today's Damascus Gate to the Zion Gate. Along the Cardo in the map, two large church complexes are clearly shown – the [Holy Sepulcher](#) in the north and the Nea Church at the southern end.

The Madaba Map, the earliest graphic representation of [Jerusalem](#), guided archeologists in their search for the remains of Byzantine [Jerusalem](#). After the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, excavations were conducted in the Jewish Quarter (located in the southeastern part of the Old City). The Nea Church and the Cardo were discovered, in the locations depicted in the Madaba map.

### The Nea Church

*In Jerusalem he (Justinian) built a church in honor of the Virgin which is beyond compare. People call this church the New Church (Nea). Thus wrote Procopius, court historian of the emperor Justinian. The full name of the edifice was the Church of Mary, Mother of God. Procopius recounts details of its construction and the names of the various buildings which made up the large church complex.*

Portions of the church were uncovered on the southern slope of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. The church was built on a massive podium supported by thick walls of stone and concrete resting on deep bedrock. It was a very large structure, 115 m. long and 57 m. wide, divided by four rows of columns which supported the roof. The eastern wall was especially broad (6.5 meters) and contained side apses, 5 meters in diameter. Marble pavement covered the floor.

Along the southern side of the church, where the bedrock is at great depth, a very large subterranean water reservoir was found, completely preserved. Some of the annexes of the church had been built above it. The reservoir measures 33 x 17 m. and is divided into vaults supported by arches which rest on huge (5 x 3.5 m.) piers, ten meters high. The interior of the reservoir was coated with a thick layer of hard plaster; it had a capacity of thousands of gallons of water.

A surprising discovery was a dedicatory inscription placed in the water reservoir. Found high on the southern wall, the Greek inscription, in red-painted plaster relief letters, reads:

*And this is the work which our most pious Emperor Flavius Justinian carried out with munificence, under the care and devotion of the most holy Constantine, priest and Hegumen, in the 13th (year of the) indiction.\**

The inscription provides evidence for the identification of the remains with the Nea Church, its location corroborated by the Madaba Map.

## The Cardo

The remains of an elaborate north-south colonnaded street – the Cardo – were found in the center of the Jewish Quarter, exactly as depicted in the Madaba map. A 200-meter-long section of the street, four meters below present-day street level, was exposed. Its northern part was laid upon several meters of earth fill, whilst the southern end was on leveled bedrock, which created a six-meter-high rock scarp on its western side.

The Cardo was 22.5 m. wide, divided by two rows of stone columns into a broad street flanked on either side by five-meter-wide covered passageways. A wooden beam construction supported the roofing, probably of ceramic tiles. Bordering the street on its eastern side was an arcade of large arches supported by piers built of ashlar. Shops lined the street along its southwestern part; more shops were located behind the arcade of arches.

The monolithic columns, of hard limestone, were found in fragments, incorporated into later structures. The bases are in Attic profile, while the capitals are carved in the Corinthian style. The columns, five meters high, have been reconstructed in their original positions in the Cardo. The well-hewn paving stones, laid in parallel rows, are smoothed and cracked with age.

The southern part of the Cardo, uncovered in the Jewish Quarter, was built during the reign of the emperor Justinian (527-565), as a continuation of the earlier, Roman, northern part, thus linking the two main churches of Byzantine [Jerusalem](#) – the [Holy Sepulcher](#) and the Nea Church.

Along the reconstructed part of the Cardo one can walk today, as did people some 1500 years ago. In the twelfth century, the [Crusaders](#) built a covered bazaar over a section of the Cardo; from this section, the debris of centuries have been removed and modern stores offer their wares to shoppers.

*The remains of the Nea Church and of the Cardo were un-covered by N. Avigad on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

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### Jerusalem: The Northern Gate of Aelia Capitolina

The gate in the northern wall of the Old City of [Jerusalem](#), designed to serve those entering the city from the north, was constructed in 1538 during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Known today as the Damascus Gate, it is the largest and most elaborate of all the Old City gates.

Massive architectural remains incorporated into the foundations of the present structure suggested the possibility that it concealed parts of an earlier gate. Indeed, during the 1930s and again in the 1960s, excavations along the outer side of the Damascus Gate exposed the remains of the fortified Crusader gate and, below it, the second century Roman city gate preserved almost intact.

New excavations between 1979 - 1984 enabled scholars to familiarize themselves with this unique gate. It was an impressive city gate with three entrances, protected on both sides by massive towers. Only the eastern entrance has survived in its entirety but it indicates that all the entrances were spanned by arches, while engaged columns on high bases decorated the sides of each entrance.

The walls of the towers were built of large, well-dressed stones with typically Herodian margins. They had, no doubt, been removed from public buildings and from the retaining walls of the Temple Mount, after [Jerusalem](#) was destroyed by the Roman legions. The eastern tower of the Roman gate has survived to a height of 12 m., almost its original height, while the western tower is preserved to a height of 11 m. A flight of steps gives access to the roof of the towers.

The later excavations put an end to the longstanding dispute concerning the date of the gate's construction. It is now clear that the gate was part of Roman Aelia Capitolina built at the beginning of the second century.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Tenth Roman Legion was stationed in Jerusalem to watch over the ruins and keep the Jews from returning to live in the city and from visiting the Temple Mount. During his journey to the eastern part of the Roman Empire in the years 130-131, Emperor Hadrian ordered that a pagan colony be established in Jerusalem, to be named Aelia Capitolina. This was the cause of the Jewish (Bar-Kochba) revolt in the years 132-135 CE. The elaborate city gate was undoubtedly built by Hadrian to mark the northern border of the unwalled Roman colony.

Above the eastern entrance to the gate one can still see a fragmentary inscription in Latin, probably in secondary use, which ends ".. by the decree of the decurions of Aelia Capitolina." Another triumphal gate was erected on the eastern side of the city at the time. Its remains are known today as the *Ecce Homo* arch.

The northern city gate of Roman Jerusalem was in use during the second and third centuries. Its side entrances were blocked during the Byzantine and Early Arab periods, and later the Crusaders built a new, fortified gate at a much higher level, thus unwittingly preserving the remains of the Roman gate below it.

The Roman gate of Aelia Capitolina has been restored and opened to the public; upon descending below the bridge leading to the Ottoman Damascus Gate, one can enter once again through this early gate into the city or climb the original stairs to the walkway along the Old City walls to enjoy the breathtaking view of the Old City and the Temple Mount.

The excavations were carried out by M. Magen on behalf of the East Jerusalem Development Corporation

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## Jerusalem — Silver Plaques

Several seasons of excavation were carried out between 1975 and 1995 on Ketef Hinnom (Hebrew for "shoulder of Hinnom") a hill overlooking the Hinnom Valley, southwest of the Old City of [Jerusalem](#). In the area next to St. Andrew's Church, finds dating from the Iron Age to the Ottoman period were uncovered.

The major discovery of the Ketef Hinnom excavations were several rock-hewn burial caves dating from the end of the First Temple period (7th century BCE), which contained an abundance of small artifacts, though the caves had been plundered and damaged in the past. The burial chambers have wide rock-cut benches, some with a raised headrest, on which bodies were laid. Space hewn beneath the benches served as repositories of bones for secondary burial, making room for burial of other family members.

One of the larger tombs, which probably belonged to a wealthy family, was found almost intact, with over a thousand objects in it: many small pottery vessels; artifacts of iron and bronze including arrowheads, needles and pins; bone and ivory objects; glass bottles; and jewelry, including earrings of gold and silver. The tomb was in use for several generations towards the end of the First Temple period and for some time after the destruction of 587-6 BCE.

The most important of all the objects found in this tomb are two small silver scrolls. They were somewhat damaged — small wonder, since they were placed in the tomb in the 7th century BCE. Carefully unrolled by experts at the Israel Museum laboratories, they were found to be covered with ancient Hebrew script on the obverse, which was deciphered with some difficulty.

The larger of the two plaques measures 97 x 27 mm., the smaller only 39 x 11 mm. The larger plaque contains 18 lines of writing, mostly legible. Both plaques contain benediction formulas in paleo-Hebrew script, almost identical to the biblical Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6:24-26.

This biblical text, dated to the 7th century BCE, is the oldest known to date and pre-dates the texts found in the Dead Sea area by about 500 years. The word *yhwh* (the name of the Lord in Hebrew) appears in writing for the first time ever. The benediction quoted from the Book of Numbers was recited by the Temple priests when blessing the congregation; here it is found in writing and for individual use. The tiny silver scrolls were probably worn as amulets around the neck.

The excavations were directed by G. Barkay on behalf of Tel Aviv University.

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# Jerusalem: Stone Vessel Workshop of the Second Temple Period

by Hillel Geva

During construction work on the eastern slope of [Mt. Scopus](#), a bulldozer broke through the ceiling of a large cave. It became immediately apparent to archeologists that the cave was man-made and had served as a quarry and workshop for the production of stone vessels, of a type well known from the late [Second Temple period](#) in [Jerusalem](#).

This period was characterized by increased observance of halachic (of the [halacha](#), Jewish Law) purity laws among the Jews. According to [halacha](#), stone vessels, unlike pottery vessels, do not become ritually impure. Thus stone vessels were widely used as tableware, and for the storage of water and food, and many have been uncovered in archeological excavations.

The site consists of two separate underground cave complexes with a total area of about 5,000 sq.m., cut into a Senonian limestone layer. This rock formation was chosen for its softness, suitable for the manufacture of such vessels. The quarrying of rectangular stone blocks of about 1.5 x 0.7 m. left cutting grooves in the walls, floors and ceilings of the cave. After cutting around the blocks, they were detached from the bedrock by hammer-blows on metal wedges inserted behind them. From these blocks the stone vessels were manufactured in the quarry, some on lathes, some by hand.

Quantities of wasters of stone vessels discarded during the various production stages, and large numbers of cylindrical stone cores of different

sizes (removed from the vessels during lathe-turning) attest to the manufacture of tens of thousands of items. Activity in the caves took place in the 1st century CE, until the destruction of [Jerusalem](#) by the Romans in the year 70 CE. Whole, undamaged vessels were not found; they were apparently delivered to the markets of Jerusalem and its environs.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the *New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* and editor of *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*.

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## Jerusalem: Umayyad Administration Center and Palaces

The conquest of [Jerusalem](#) by the Arab army in 638 was the beginning of an important era in the city's long history. The new rulers, of the Umayyad Dynasty (660-750), aimed at changing the character of the city – from a Byzantine-Christian city of many churches, to a Muslim religious center and the administrative seat for a subdivision of their empire. They restored the breached walls of the Temple Mount (*Haram al-Sharif*) and built two impressive sanctuaries on it: the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa mosque.

The two Hulda Gates of the Second Temple period in the southern wall of the Temple Mount were restored in order to provide the faithful with easy access to the *Haram's* esplanade. The facade of the western of the two gates, the "Double Gate," is preserved and the carved stone archway dating to this period is still visible.

In excavations carried out in the 1970s south and southwest of the Temple Mount, the remains of six massive buildings were uncovered. Not known previously, they were obviously an administrative center of the Umayyad government.

The area south of the Temple Mount, which had sloped southwards, was leveled by earth fills and massive building foundations which entirely covered the Byzantine structures below. The result was a flat surface upon which the buildings were constructed, intersected by paved streets. Clay pipes were inserted into the stones of the Temple Mount wall, to provide running water from the main aqueduct along the restored Wilson's Arch on the [Western Wall](#). Rainwater was channeled into large cisterns beneath the buildings, and an extensive drainage system was installed.

The Islamic administrative center included palaces and other buildings, which have been only partly uncovered. The palaces were similar in plan: a central courtyard surrounded by many rooms. Other structures, known as "pillared buildings," had large stone-paved courtyards with rows of square pilasters supporting the roofs.

The largest and most impressive palace, near the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount, was excavated completely. It was obviously the seat of the Umayyad caliph whenever he visited [Jerusalem](#). This palace measures 96 x 84 m. and is surrounded by a three meter-thick protective wall, constructed of large, trimmed stones, many in secondary use from the collapsed Herodian walls of the Temple Mount. Two main gates, one facing east and one facing west, gave access to the palace. A broad, stone-paved courtyard in the center of the building was surrounded by rows of columns supporting the roofing of the porticoes. Many of the columns came from Byzantine churches, as evidenced by traces of engraved crosses on them. The rooms around the central courtyard were paved with small stone slabs and mosaic. Plaster, decorated with geometric designs and floral motifs, covered the exceptionally thick walls.

A bridge was built from the roof of this palace to the *Haram*, providing direct access to the Al-Aksa mosque.

The palace was apparently constructed during the reign of the Umayyad caliph El-Walid I (705-715) and is similar to other fortified Umayyad palaces on the fringe of the desert in Transjordan and Syria. But unlike those, the palace in [Jerusalem](#) – a fortified city – was not protected by towers.

This magnificent complex of Islamic buildings was destroyed by the earthquake of 749; evidence of this are the fallen columns and collapsed walls.

Some of the buildings, and particularly the main palace, have recently been restored and are now open to visitors. They are an impressive addition to the many discoveries of earlier times – those of the [Second Temple](#), the Roman and the Byzantine periods – which have been exposed and preserved in this location.

The excavations were conducted by B. Mazar on behalf of the Israel Exploration

Society and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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### Jerusalem: The Upper City During the Second Temple Period

During the reign of [King Herod](#) (end of the 1st century BCE), [Jerusalem](#) grew enormously in area and intensive building activity, unparalleled in the city's history, took place. Many public buildings were constructed - the most impressive of them the [Temple Mount](#) and the [Temple](#) itself.

The city was surrounded by walls with many towers. At the northwestern corner of the city wall, Herod built three massive towers that protected the royal palace just south of them. Of these towers, only the base of the one traditionally known as the "[Tower of David](#)" remains today; it was incorporated into the [Ottoman](#) citadel of the city, south of the Jaffa Gate.

The residential area on the western hill of Jerusalem during the Second Temple Period (its area today extends over the Jewish and Armenian quarters of the [Old City](#) and Mount Zion beyond the walls, to the south) became known as the "Upper City". The name stems from the fact that it is topographically higher than the rest of the city, even the Temple Mount. It was re-planned and rebuilt in the finest [Roman](#) tradition by [Herod](#) and his successors, with blocks of large buildings separated by streets, and plazas along which palaces and public buildings stood.

The Upper City was the neighborhood of the rich, with large, elaborate dwellings inhabited by the families of the high priests and of the local aristocracy. Here were the palaces of the [Hasmonean kings](#), of [King Herod](#) and of the High Priest Caiaphas (who is mentioned in the [New Testament](#)). Here, Jesus was arrested and held for a night before he was handed over to the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, for sentencing. ([Matthew 26: 57-75](#);



[Luke 22:54-71, 23:1](#)) According to Christian tradition, the palace of the High Priest Caiaphas stood on Mt. Zion, which today is outside the [Old City](#) wall, to the south.

The walls, the towers and the elaborate palaces of the Upper City are described in detail by the contemporary Jewish historian and native Jerusalemite, [Josephus Flavius](#). He was an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and he also describes the conquest of the Upper City, where the Roman soldiers plundered the palaces and elegant homes and burnt them to their foundations, on the 8th day of Elul in the year 70 CE, one month after the destruction of the [Temple](#).

*Caesar, finding it impracticable to reduce the upper city without earthworks, owing to the precipitous nature of the site, on the twentieth of the month Lous (Ab) apportioned the task among his forces. The conveyance of timber was, however, arduous, all the environs of the city to a distance of a hundred furlongs having, as I said, been stripped bare. The earthworks having now been completed after eighteen days' labor, on the seventh of the month Gorpiaeus (Elul) the Romans brought up the engines. Of the rebels, some already despairing of the city, retired from the ramparts to the citadel, others slunk down into the tunnels. Pouring into the alleys, sword in hand, they (the Romans) massacred indiscriminately all whom they met, and burnt the houses with all who had taken refuge within. Often in the course of their raids, on entering the houses for loot, they would find whole families dead and the rooms filled with the victims of the famine... Running everyone through who fell in their way, they choked the alleys with corpses and deluged the whole city with blood, insomuch that many of the fires were extinguished by the gory stream. Towards evening they ceased slaughtering, but when night fell the fire gained the mastery, and the dawn of the eighth day of the month of Gorpiaeus (Elul) broke upon Jerusalem in flames - a city which had suffered such calamities...The Romans now set fire to the outlying quarters of the town and razed the walls to the ground. Thus was Jerusalem taken in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, on the eighth of the month of Gorpiaeus. (20 September, 70 CE)*

(War VI. 8-10)

From 1969 to 1982, when the [Jewish Quarter](#) of the [Old City of Jerusalem](#) was rebuilt, the Upper City of the [Second Temple period](#) became subject to comprehensive archeological investigation. Impressive remains of continuous settlement on the western hill were uncovered - from the end of the [First Temple period](#) (8th-7th centuries BCE) to modern times.

Remains of the dwellings of the Upper City, which had been buried for almost 1,900 years, were exposed. Houses and artifacts were preserved almost in their entirety, protected by a thick blanket of the debris of later occupation. The finds confirm very precisely the written evidence of [Josephus Flavius](#) and the fierceness of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Upper City.

Upon completion of the excavations, remains from the Upper City were preserved as museums, beneath the new buildings of the Jewish Quarter. Visitors may walk through the courtyards and the rooms of houses, in which the stone furniture and vessels used by the inhabitants 2,000 years ago stand intact. They provide a vivid record of the way of life that ended there in the year 70 CE.

## **The Herodian Quarter**

This was the main excavation site in the Jewish Quarter, with parts of six or seven houses covering an area of some 2,700 sq. m. The houses were built on terraces, on the slope of the hill facing eastward toward the Tyropoeon Valley, opposite the Temple Mount.

## **The Palatial Mansion**

The "Palatial Mansion" in the Herodian Quarter is the largest, most complete and most elaborate of the [Second Temple period](#) dwellings uncovered in the Jewish Quarter. It faithfully represents the architecture, and the splendor of the buildings typical of the Upper City.

Located at the eastern edge of the Upper City, the building was constructed during the reign of [King Herod](#). It provided a good view of the Temple Mount and the [Temple](#), and extended over three terraces with a total area of 600 sq. m. Remains of two stories of this house were excavated: the ground floor in the western portion of the house included a central courtyard and living quarters; a basement in the eastern and northern

portions included water installations, storage and service rooms. The house had thick walls built of well-trimmed Jerusalem limestone and its foundations were laid on bedrock. Some parts of the house were preserved to an impressive height of 2-3 m.

The central courtyard (8 x 8 m.) on the ground floor was paved with square stones. It was surrounded by many rooms and gave access to the other wings of the house. On the eastern side of the courtyard was an opening to a large underground cistern, which was hewn into the rock and plastered with thick gray plaster to prevent seepage. From the mouth of the cistern, a narrow shaft led down into its bell-shaped cavity. Rainwater was collected from the roofs and courtyards of the house and carried via a network of channels and pipes into the cistern, which had a capacity of several hundred gallons and provided water for daily use during the dry summer months.

The ground floor of the elaborate western wing of the Palatial Mansion included a vestibule (entrance room) with a mosaic pavement consisting of a colored square panel with a multi-petalled rosette in the center and pomegranates at the corners.

On the walls of the room next to the vestibule, frescos were preserved to a considerable height. These colored frescos are in the style popular at the time in the Hellenistic-Roman world, with colored panels, imitation marble, architectural elements and floral motifs.

Numerous examples of colored mosaic floors were found in the houses of the Upper City, both in reception halls and baths. These are the oldest mosaic floors found in Jerusalem to date. Similar designs were found in King Herod's palaces at [Masada](#), Herodium and elsewhere. The decorative motifs in these mosaics include geometric designs - interlacing meanders, wavy lines and pleated bands. Floral motifs are also common, especially stylized rosettes with differing numbers of petals. It is also noteworthy that the corpus of decorative motifs used in the mosaics and frescos of the Second Temple period did not include representations of humans or of animals, since Jews strictly avoided figurative art.

The reception hall of the house was particularly large (11 x 6.5 m.) and very elaborate. Its walls, preserved to a height of 3 m., were covered with white stucco, modeled in relief as panels. The imitation is of the costly Hellenistic-Roman construction of ashlar with marginal boss, as in the retaining walls of the Herodian Temple Mount complex. To the west of the

reception hall, three rooms partially cut into the rock of the hillside, were uncovered. The walls of these rooms, decorated with frescos, were found covered with a layer of white plaster in preparation for redecoration, indicating that the residential wing of this mansion was in the process of renovation when the Romans destroyed it.

East of the central courtyard a small room with a bench and a mosaic floor was uncovered, with a small mikve (Jewish ritual bath, pl. mikva'ot) next to it. From the courtyard two stone staircases led to the basement level: one to a storage room and a mikve; the second to a network of storage areas, rooms and mikva'ot in the northern and eastern parts of the house. One of the rooms on the basement level was paved with a mosaic in chessboard pattern (black and white stones) and from it a double entrance gave access to a large mikveh with a vaulted ceiling.

*Mikva'ot* are among the most common features in the residences of the Upper City of Jerusalem. In each house there were one or two - and sometimes more - *mikva'ot*, evidence of the importance accorded to ritual purity. A typical mikve was cut into the rock, plastered and roofed with a vaulted stone ceiling; a broad flight of steps led to its bottom. The *mikva'ot* were filled in winter with rainwater and in summer with water from the cisterns. At times bathtubs, constructed of small stones, cement and plaster were placed next to the *mikva'ot*.

It might be assumed that the Palatial Mansion, with its location overlooking the Temple Mount and its large number of mik'vaot, was owned by a priestly family.

## The Burnt House

The residence known as the Burnt House, located north of the Palatial Mansion, also dates from the Second Temple period. Here, for the first time, evidence was found of the total destruction of the city by the Romans in the year 70 CE. Although only a small area of the house was exposed, it proved to be far richer in small finds than the other houses uncovered in the Upper City.

The ground floor of the Burnt House was exposed, including a small courtyard, four rooms, a kitchen and a mikve. The walls of the house, built of stones and cement and covered with a thick white plaster, were preserved to a height of about one meter. In the floors of the rooms, of beaten earth, were the sunken bases of round ovens made of brown clay,

indicating perhaps that this wing of the house was used as a workshop.

The courtyard of the house was paved with stone, and through it one reached the kitchen and the other rooms. Three of these were medium-sized and a fourth, a side room, extremely small. The mikve is very small, covered with gray plaster, and has four steps descending to its bottom. In the corner of the kitchen was a stove, basalt grinding-stones next to it, and a large stone tray.

The Burnt House was found buried under a thick layer of destruction. Throughout the house, scattered in disarray among the collapsed walls, ceilings and the second story, were fragments of stone tables and many ceramic, stone and metal vessels, evidence of pillaging by the Roman soldiers. Leaning against a corner of one of the rooms was an iron spear, which apparently had belonged to one of the Jewish fighters who lived here. At the entrance to the side room, the arm bones of a young woman were found, the fingers clutching at the stone threshold. The many iron nails found in the ruins are all that was left of the wooden roof, the shelves and furnishings which were completely burnt. Numerous coins minted during the rebellion against the Romans (66-70 CE) attest to the date of the destruction of this house.

In one of the rooms a round stone weight, 10 cm. in diameter, was found. On it, in square Aramaic script was the Hebrew inscription (of) Bar Kathros, indicating that it belonged to the son of a man named Kathros. The "House of Kathros" is known as that of a priestly family, which had abused its position in the Temple. A ditty preserved in talmudic literature speaks of the corruption of these priests:

*Woe is me because of the House of Boethus,  
woe is me because of their slaves.*

*Woe is me because of the House of Hanan,  
woe is me because of their incantations.*

***Woe is me because of the House of Kathros,  
woe is me because of their pens.***

*Woe is me because of the House of Ishmael, son of Phiabi,  
woe is me because of their fists.*

*For they are the High Priests, and their sons are treasurers,  
and their sons-in law are trustees, and their servants beat  
the people with staves.*

(Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 57, 1



Tosefta, *Minhot* 13, 21)

Can we assume that the Burnt House was actually the House of Kathros?

## **Finds from the Second Temple Period in the Upper City**

Hundreds of complete pottery vessels were found, mainly in the mikva'ot and the cisterns of the houses, where they had apparently been placed during the siege. Many of the artifacts and vessels, objects of daily use in the 1st century CE, are currently displayed in the museums of the Herodian Quarter and the Burnt House.

*Tables* - fragments of dozens of stone tables of two types - typical household furniture - were discovered in the excavations. Large tables of local limestone consist of a rectangular tabletop (averaging 85 x 45 cm.) engraved on three sides with geometric and floral motifs, which stood on one, central leg (70-80 cm. average height) in the form of a column with a base. These heavy tables were placed against a wall.

Small, round tables, ca. 50 cm. in diameter, made of different stone including local limestone and imported granite and marble, stood on wooden tripod legs that have not been preserved. These were portable tables used for serving food to guests who reclined on low wooden couches in the elaborate reception rooms.

*Stone Vessels* - An enormous number of stone vessels of the Second Temple period were found in the houses of the Upper City. The vessels were made of easily worked, soft local limestone, found in abundance in Jerusalem and especially on Mount Scopus and on the Mount of Olives. The vessels were made on a lathe or by hand. More unusual are the large, lathe-made vessels. They are 60-80 cm. high with thick straight or rounded walls, goblet-shaped with wide mouths, on a pedestal. Most of the smaller vessels are also lathe-made, in a wide variety of sizes and shapes: bowls, cups and vessels in imitation of imported pottery. Among the vessels made by hand with a broad-bladed gouge are trays and containers of various sizes. The so-called measuring cups, shaped like mugs with straight walls and large handles, were also handmade.

The stone vessel industry that flourished in Jerusalem during the 1st century CE is clearly related to the strict observance of Jewish laws governing ritual purity, according to which stone does not absorb impurity. (Mishna, *Kelim* 10:1; Parah 5:5) The purity of stone vessels is also



mentioned in the [New Testament](#), in the miracle of the changing of water into wine at Cana. ([John 2: 1-7](#))

*Menorah Engraving* - Two fragments of light-colored plaster, dating to the Second Temple period, on which a seven-branched menorah (candelabrum) is depicted, were found in the Jewish Quarter. The menorah engraving is 20 cm. high and 12.5 cm. wide. It has seven high branches, with a flame on top of each branch; it stands on a tripod base and is decorated with circles separated by pairs of lines. This decoration corresponds to the biblical description of the menorah:

*On one branch there shall be three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, and on the next branch there shall be three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals.*  
([Exodus 25:33](#))

*Make its seven lamps - the lamps shall be so mounted as to give the light on its front side.*  
([Exodus 25:37](#))

This appears to be the earliest detailed drawing of the menorah that stood in the Temple of Jerusalem and was taken as booty by the Romans when they conquered the city.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Jerusalem - Water Systems of Biblical Times

by [Hillel Geva](#)

The [City of David](#), which was Biblical [Jerusalem](#), is located on a low, narrow spur south of the [Temple Mount](#) and today's [Old City](#). A settlement existed here in the Bronze and Iron Ages, of which remains of fortifications and buildings have been found (see Archeological Sites in Israel No.1, pp. 19-23).

The City of David was built on a hill of hard limestone, in which underground water created karstic caves. The Gihon Spring, the only source of water of the city, emerges in the Kidron Valley, east of the City of David. It is mentioned many times in the Bible, e.g., its location in the valley east of the city (II Chronicles 33:14); the anointing of Solomon as King of Israel (I Kings 1:35, 45). It made the founding of the City of David possible, and sustained its existence for thousands of years. The Hebrew name of the spring is derived from the verb meaning "to gush forth," reflecting the flow of the spring, which is not steady, but intermittent, its frequency varying with the seasons of the year and annual precipitation. It is a siphon-type karst spring fed by groundwater that accumulates in a subterranean cave. Each time that space fills to the brim, it empties at once through cracks in the rock and is siphoned to the surface. This natural feature made it necessary to accumulate water in a pool, to be available at times when the spring was not "gushing forth."

The spring emerged in a cave on the eastern slope of the City of David above the Kidron Valley, and from there water flowed into the valley, watering the terraced, agricultural plots on the slope of the City of David. This area is called in the Bible the "King's Garden" (II Kings 25:4;

Jeremiah 52:7; Nehemiah 3:15). Today, the bed of the Kidron Valley is filled with 15 m. of erosion and debris, which have accumulated over the millennia. During the Second Temple period, a vault was built over the spring, to which one could descend via a long staircase. Water flowed from the spring along Hezekiah's Tunnel to the Siloam Pool, (John 9:7) which is located in the low, southern part of the Tyropoeon Valley, west of the City of David.

Three waterworks, fed by the Gihon spring, were carved into the rock beneath the City of David in antiquity and they are the most complex and advanced of any known from Biblical cities. The systems were planned in different periods, served varied purposes and functioned in distinct ways. All three water systems were in operation simultaneously in the First Temple period, and each contributed to the efficiency of the city's water supply. They also attest to the efforts of the kings of ancient Jerusalem to guarantee the water supply in time of siege.

## **The "Warren's Shaft" System**

In times of war and siege, the City of David's water supply was vulnerable, since the Gihon spring in the Kidron Valley was outside the city walls. The "[Warren's Shaft](#)" System is the earliest subterranean water system and, filled with accumulated debris, it was discovered by C. Warren in 1867 and named after him. Investigation and documentation were conducted by H. Vincent (1909-1911). In the early 1980s, the Warren's Shaft System was cleared and reinvestigated by Y. Shilo and, since 1995, new research included excavation of the eastern extremity of the shaft.

The entrance to the Warren's Shaft System is located in the middle of the eastern slope of the City of David, within the ancient city's walls. It consisted of a subterranean, rock-cut tunnel with a shaft at its end. At the entrance, the tunnel slopes steeply downward in a stepped passage. This portion is covered by a well-constructed vault from the Second Temple period, which prevented soil and rocks from falling into the system. Farther down, the tunnel becomes less steep. At first, it extends in a northeasterly direction, then angles sharply to the southeast. The total length of the tunnel is 41 m. and it descends 13 m.; its width is 2.5-3.0 m. and its height varies from 1.5 m. at the entrance to a maximum of 5 m. At its easternmost end is a narrow, irregularly shaped vertical shaft some 2 m. wide and 12.5 m. deep, which leads to the waters of the Gihon Spring; going down the tunnel to the shaft, water could be drawn with a container

fastened to a rope. Thus, in time of siege it was possible to safely draw water from the spring without venturing outside the walls. The narrow vertical shaft at the end of the system was impenetrable from the outside.

Most scholars were in agreement that the Warren's Shaft System was man-made and the product of a tremendous effort. However, a hydrological study conducted at the beginning of the 1980s, established that the shaft and most of the tunnel were natural karstic fissures in the rock. The planners of the system had taken advantage of these, combining and adapting them in cutting a complete system that made subterranean passage from the city to the spring possible.

On discovery of the Warren's Shaft System it was proposed to identify it with the tsinnor (Hebrew, pipe or shaft) mentioned in the Bible in the description of David's conquest of the city (II Samuel 5:8): And David said on that day, whosoever gets up to the tsinnor, and smites the Jebusites... The meaning of tsinnor is problematic and a parallel description of the city's conquest by David (I Chronicles 11:4-7) fails to mention it. For this reason, and in light of comparative archeological research, the identification of the Biblical tsinnor with the Warren's Shaft System was not accepted by most modern archeologists. Such an identification would have meant dating the tsinnor to the period of Canaanite and Jebusite rule in the city (i.e., prior to David's conquest in the 10th century BCE), for which there was no archeological evidence. It should also be noted that other Biblical cities ([Megiddo](#), [Hatzor](#)) had water systems combining similar elements, and these are dated to the period of the Divided Monarchy (9th century BCE).

This was the accepted theory about the Warren's Shaft System until renewed research in the 1990s. Next to the Gihon Spring, remains of fortifications and of a waterwork from earlier days of Jerusalem were unexpectedly uncovered. Exposed were two massive towers of enormous stones that protruded eastward from the line of the city wall. Between them was a very deep rock-cut pool. The towers protected the spring and the pool, denying access to them while guaranteeing the water supply in time of siege. The excavators dated this fortification system to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE (Canaanite period).

The short section of the tunnel from the low eastern end of the Warren's Shaft was cleared during the new excavations and found to lead to the surface on the eastern slope of the City of David, opposite the pool and towers just described. This new research supports the old view that the

Warren's Shaft system was entirely man-made, by two teams of workmen beginning work on opposite sides.

According to this new view, the Warren's Shaft System consists of two chronologically distinct phases of rock cutting. In the first phase, on construction of the towers and the pool near the spring (at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE), the upper part of the system was cut into the soft chalk. This low tunnel followed a curving course with a gradual slope to its outlet on the surface, opposite the rock-cut pool protected by the towers. In the second phase (8th century BCE, under the United Kingdom), the tunnel was deepened and cut into harder rock. Work was stopped when the tunnel encountered the top of the vertical shaft, through which water could be drawn from the Gihon Spring.

This new research, though leaving several important problems unresolved, nevertheless enables us once more to consider its possible connection to the Biblical tsinnor.

## The Siloam Channel

The [Siloam Channel](#), cut at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, emerges from the Gihon Spring and extends approximately 400 m. southward along the low, eastern slope of the City of David, around the city's southern end and empties into a reservoir in the Tyropoeon Valley. The channel's northern part is 2.75 m. deep and is covered by large stones; the southern part is open, but becomes a rock-cut tunnel towards the end. Openings along the channel allowed water to flow out and irrigate the terraces on the eastern slope of the City of David.

Some identify the Siloam Channel with the waters of Shiloah that go softly (Isaiah 8:5). It was blocked after the cutting of Hezekiah's Tunnel. The biblical passage referring to this is probably II Chronicles 32:4: So a great many people were gathered together, who stopped up all the springs, and also the wadi that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Ashur (Assyria) come and find much water?

## Hezekiah's Tunnel

[Hezekiah's tunnel](#) is the latest and most impressive of the water systems built in the City of David. Although its existence was known hundreds of years ago, its systematic investigation was undertaken only in the last century. Clearance of the tunnel, thorough study and mapping were



carried out by H. Vincent between 1909 and 1911. The Siloam Inscription, discovered in the tunnel at the end of the 19th century, was removed and is today in the Archeological Museum of Istanbul.

The tunnel was cut into the rock beneath the City of David, in a 533 m.-long, "S"-shaped course. In a straight line, the distance from the Gihon Spring to the Siloam Pool is only 325 m. The average width of the tunnel is about 60 cm.; it is about 2 m. high along most of its course, but reaches 3 - 4 m. in some sections at the beginning and the end. The Tunnel was finely carved out, with chisel marks visible. The downward slope from beginning to end is very gentle, approximately 2 m. altogether, with an average decline of 0.4%.

The tunnel was cut during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah (end of 8th century BCE) and described in detail in a six-line inscription, in paleo-Hebrew script, cut into the rock near the exit:

"...breakthrough and this was the account of the breakthrough. While the laborers were still working with their picks, each toward the other, and while there were still three cubits to be broken through, the voice of each was heard calling to the other, because there was a *zdh* [crack?] in the rock to the south and to the north. And at the moment of the breakthrough, the laborers struck each toward the other, pick against pick. Then the water flowed from the spring to the pool for 1,200 cubits. And the height of the rock above the heads of the laborers was 100 cubits."

The project is mentioned in the [Bible \(II Kings 20:20\)](#): "...and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city..." and again in II Chronicles 32:30: "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David."

In view of the threat of an Assyrian invasion of Judah, work on the fortifications and the cutting of the tunnel had to be carried out in great haste. Included was a fortified wall surrounding the western hill (Mt. Zion and the southern part of today's Old City), thus including the Siloam Pool in the Tyropoean Valley, within the city walls.

The curving course of Hezekiah's Tunnel, and the description of how it was cut by two teams of workers, raises questions about engineering and planning capabilities enabling the two teams to meet; not a simple matter considering that work was carried out in the depths of the earth, with



minimal lighting by oil lamps, and with little oxygen. There must have been a reason for the long, curving route, requiring so much more effort than a straight one. Several explanations have been proposed over the years. According to one, the workmen followed curving rock formations; another, erroneous one, was that the curve was intended to bypass the (mistakenly identified) Tombs of the House of David; the most probable explanation is that the workmen followed a crack in the rock through which some water flowed from the Gihon to the Tyropoean Valley. The Siloam Inscription mentions that "there was a zdh in the rock", which could be interpreted as a crack (geological, or the result of karstic activity, or both), in which some water flowed, and which they enlarged into a tunnel. The entrance to the spring in the Kidron Valley was then skillfully disguised.

Since removal of the debris that blocked Warren's Shaft, it has been open to visitors. Hezekiah's Tunnel may also be traversed, walking through the water that flows in it to the Pool of Siloam.

The Warren's Shaft System was cleared and examined by the Y. Shilo expedition to the City of David (1978-1985) on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Exploration Society and the Jerusalem Foundation. Under its auspices, a hydrological survey of the water system was carried out by D. Gil. New excavations have been conducted since 1995 by R. Reich and E. Shukron on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Hillel Geva studied archeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, participated in excavations in the Jewish Quarter and the Citadel in Jerusalem, and is author of the entry "Jerusalem" in the New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land and editor of *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*.

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Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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### A Monastery on the Mount of Olives

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On the eastern slopes of the [Mount of Olives](#), near the road connecting [Jerusalem](#) and [Jericho](#), a monastery dated to the [Byzantine](#)-Early [Islamic](#) period (5th to 8th centuries) was uncovered. The building complex included a church, dining hall, bathhouse, stables and an elaborate water system. It may have served pilgrims as a last way station before entering Jerusalem. A mosaic inscription (in Greek) on the dining room floor reads: In the days of Theodoros the priest and father of the monastery, and the monk Kiriakos this work was accomplished.

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Source: [Israeli Foreign Ministry](#)

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## Robinson's Arch

The [Western Wall](#) that we know today is not merely the area that most people use for prayer, call the "Kotel," or used by the government of Israel for official ceremony. It includes the entire western retaining wall of the [Temple Mount](#), including what is known of as Robinson's Arch on the southern end of the Wall. Robinson's Arch was originally thought to be a series of bridges leading from the Upper City to the Temple Mount. Many tour books still reflect this misperception.

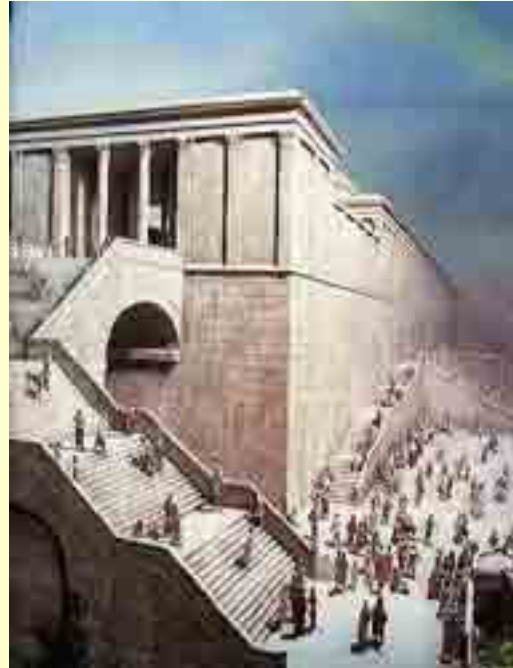
Photo courtesy of [www.HolyLandPhotos.org](http://www.HolyLandPhotos.org)



The original thinking of Robinson's Arch was that when [Herod](#) enlarged the area of the Temple Mount during the 1st century [BCE](#), the wall was higher in the southern part and a valley was created. This valley separated the Western Wall from the Upper City, making difficult direct access to the Temple Mount. A series of bridges and arches over the valley to the Temple Mount was created to solve this problem. One of these arches, located

close to the southern end of the Western Wall, is known as Robinson's Arch. The arch was discovered in 1838 and named after its discoverer, American researcher Edward Robinson.

In fact, however, that theory was disproven during the archaeological excavations of 1968-1977. Evidence showed that the arch had spanned over paved streets at multiple angles. A row of small vaults was also discovered. This row of vaults, together with Robinson's arch, supported a flight of steps leading from the street to the Temple Mount. Geographically, the arch is on the southern end of the Western retaining wall to the Temple Mount.



In the past few years, the Israeli government has used Robinson's arch as a place for groups to pray that do not meet the approval of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the arch area is not under the control of the Religious Affairs Ministry. Since 2000, egalitarian prayer has taken place at the site under the auspices of the [Conservative/Masorti](#) movement. The [Reform](#) movement was also offered Robinson's Arch as a prayer site but they refused. The woman's prayer group "[Women of the Wall](#)" was offered Robinson's Arch in May 2000 as an alternative to the Kotel for their Orthodox women's prayer group but they were then allowed to continue their traditional prayer at the Western Wall as the court ruled that Robinson's Arch would not be suitable for their prayer. However, in April 2003, the [Supreme Court](#) refused to allow Women of the Wall to continue their Orthodox prayer group and instead required the government to prepare an area at Robinson's arch within 12 months. Women of the Wall members do not feel that the Robinson's Arch-area is a suitable prayer area. Their attorney, Frances Reday, notes, "There are a lot of stones next to the wall in that area, which would need to be removed to allow for access." In the early twenty-first century, Israel opened up an archaeological park in the area around Robinson's Arch.

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Source: [Jerusalem Archaeological Park](#), *Israel: Past & Present*, [MERCAZ USA](#), [Haaretz](#)

Photos courtesy of [www.HolyLandPhotos.org](http://www.HolyLandPhotos.org), [Museum of the Bais HaMikdash](#)

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## Siloam Inscription

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The inscription was discovered in 1880 by a boy who was bathing in the waters of the Gihon Spring, and was studied by Conrad Schick, one of the first explorers of [Jerusalem](#). Engraved in the rock, the inscription describes the meeting of the two groups of hewers who had begun digging from opposite ends of the tunnel. "The tunneling was completed... While the hewers wielded the ax, each man toward his fellow... there was heard a man's voice calling to his fellow... the hewers hacked each toward the other, ax against ax, and the water flowed from the spring to the pool, a distance of 1,200 cubits..." The inscription is now in the Istanbul Museum.

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Source: [The Jerusalem Mosaic](#). [Copyright](#) 1995 Hebrew University of Jerusalem -- All Rights Reserved.

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## Warren's Shaft

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Scholars date the digging of this underground water conduit to the 9th or 10th century BCE. It is accessed by a descending tunnel which terminates in a vertical shaft the bottom of which is at the level of the Gihon Spring. Using this system, residents of ancient [Jerusalem](#) could obtain water during periods of siege or war without having to venture outside the city wall. The shaft bears the name of its 19th-century discoverer, the British scholar Charles Warren.

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# Modern Israel & the Diaspora

(1947-1949)

[1947](#)

[1948](#)

[1949](#)

## 1947

Britain requests special session of the [General Assembly](#) to consider future government of Palestine (April 2)

General Assembly establishes a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) (May 15)

[UNSCOP](#) issues majority report recommending partition of Palestine with an internationalised Jerusalem; minority report recommended federal scheme (August 31)

Arab Higher Committee formally rejects UNSCOP plan (September 29).

Jewish Agency formally accepts UNSCOP partition plan (October 2)

UN approves [partition plan](#) by a vote of 33-13 with 10 abstentions to create a Jewish and Arab state (November 29)

Arab mobs attack Jewish quarters in [Jerusalem](#) and Arab irregulars begin

operations against Jewish cities and settlements (November 30).

## 1948

U.S. proposes suspension of partition plan and calls for a special session of the General Assembly to discuss trusteeship for Palestine. (March 19)

Security Council calls for truce in Palestine and special session of the General Assembly to reconsider future of Palestine (April 1)

The Arabs of [Jaffa](#) surrender to the [Haganah](#) forces (May 13)

[Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel \(May 14\)](#). U.S. recognizes Israel de facto.

End of [British Mandate](#). [Arab armies invade](#) Israel (May 14).

President Harry S Truman [recognizes the State of Israel](#) within its first hour of existence (May 14)

USSR recognizes Israel (17 May).

[Jerusalem](#) is cut off by Arab forces (19 May).

[War of Independence \(May 1948-July 1949\)](#).

General Assembly Committee appoints Count Folke Bernadotte as mediator for Palestine. (May 20)

Brandeis University is founded in the U.S. as first nonsectarian, Jewish-sponsored, institution of higher education.

[Jewish Quarter](#) of the [Old City](#) of Jerusalem falls to the Jordanian Arab Legion (28 May).

[Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#) formed (May 31).

First convoy reaches Jerusalem along "Burma Road" (June 1).

[First cease-fire](#) proclaimed - Four week truce commences (11 June).

["Altalena"](#) fired upon and sunk off the coast of Tel-Aviv (22 June).

Arab League refuses to renew truce; fighting resumed and Israel gained on all fronts (July 8)

First cease-fire ends (9 July).

[Second cease-fire](#) proclaimed (21 July).

Arab countries reject Israeli peace proposals (14 August).

First Israeli coin minted (17 August).

UN mediator Swedish [Count Folke Bernadotte murdered](#) in Jerusalem by "Lehi" fighters. Succeeded by Dr. Bunche (September 17)

[Bernadotte Plan](#) published by UN (September 20)

Second cease-fire ends (15 October).

Fighting breaks out in [Negev](#); the Egyptian army driven south (October 15)

Security Council orders an immediate cease-fire (October 19)

Israel and Egypt agree to cease fire (October 22)

First census indicates 712,000 Jewish residents, and 69,000 Arab residents in the [State of Israel](#) (8 November).

Security Council calls for armistice talks (November 16)

Israel accepts call for armistice (November 18)

General Assembly establishes [Palestine Conciliation Commission](#), reaffirms decision on Jerusalem and calls for repatriation or resettlement of refugees (December 11)

Beginning of ["Operation Magic Carpet"](#) to bring Yemenite Jews to Israel

(17 December).

Fighting breaks out in Negev. Egyptian forces driven beyond mandatory borders, but retain the Gaza Strip (November 22).

Mass [immigration](#) from Europe and Arab countries: 1948-52.

## 1949

Fighting ends in Sinai. Israeli forces withdraw from Sinai following British ultimatum and U.S. pressure (January 7)

Israeli and Egyptian delegations meet in Rhodes for armistice talks, chaired by Dr. Bunche. Armistice agreements begin with [Egypt](#), [Jordan](#), [Syria](#), [Lebanon](#) (13 January).

[Jerusalem](#) is declared the capitol of Israel and is divided under Israeli and Jordanian rule.

[First Knesset](#) (parliament) elected. [Ben Gurion](#) heads the [Labor](#) led coalition (21 January).

Britain, New Zealand and the Netherlands recognize Israel de facto. Australia and Chile recognize Israel de jure (30 January).

U.S. recognizes Israel de jure (30 January).

Israel ends military governorship in Jerusalem (February 1).

[Chaim Weizmann](#) is elected Israel's first [president](#). First meeting of the [First Knesset](#) (14 February).

Armistice agreement signed with [Egypt](#) (24 February).

[David Ben-Gurion](#) presents first government to the [Knesset](#) (9 March).

Armistice agreement signed with [Lebanon](#) (23 March).

Armistice agreement signed with [Jordan](#) (3 April).

Trans-Jordan becomes Jordan (April 25).

First round of Israel-Arab talks in Lausanne under auspices of Palestine Conciliation Commission. (April-June)

The Weizmann Institute is inaugurated in Rehovot.

Israel admitted to [United Nations](#) as 59th member. (11 May).

Armistice agreement signed with [Syria](#) (20 July).

Second round of Israel-Arab talks in Lausanne is deadlocked (August)

[Theodore Herzl](#)'s remains are brought to Israel and interred on Mt. Herzl (17 August).

[Professor Yigal Yadin](#) appointed second IDF Chief-of-General Staff (9 November).

General Assembly votes for internationalization of Jerusalem under Trusteeship Council administration. (9 December)

Government decides to hold its Knesset sessions in Jerusalem and declares Jerusalem to be Israel's capital (13 December).

Umm Rashrash, today [Eilat](#), is captured by the [IDF](#).

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# Modern Israel & the Diaspora

(1950-1959)

## 1950

As American Jews move to the suburbs, they build new [synagogues](#). Joining a synagogue becomes the chief expression of Jewish identity. In 1930, a mere 20 percent of American Jewish families belong to a synagogue; by 1960, nearly 60 percent do.

Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg recognize Israel de jure (16 January).

Knesset by 60-2 vote, establishes Jerusalem as Israel's capital (23 January).

UN Trusteeship Council approves statute for the internationalization of [Jerusalem](#). (4 April)

[Jordan](#) annexes West Bank, including East Jerusalem (24 April)

Britain recognizes Israel de jure (28 April).

The [Knesset](#) moves from [Tel Aviv](#) to King George St. in [Jerusalem](#).

U.S., Britain and France issue Tripartite Declaration on Middle East (25 May).

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[Egypt](#), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen initial Collective Security Pact, calling on them to assist an Arab state under attack. (17 June)

The [Law of Return](#) is enacted (5 July).

First nationwide municipal elections after independence (14 November).

The [West Bank](#) unites with Jordan.

[Operation Ezra and Nehemiah](#) brings Iraqi Jews to Israel (19 May).

## 1951

[Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day](#) established on 27th of month of Nissan (12 April).

Security Council calls on Israel to halt [Huleh](#) drainage project pending arrangements to be fixed by the Mixed Armistice Commission. Fighting erupts between Israel and Syria in demilitarized zone. (May 18)

King Abdullah of [Jordan](#) is assassinated at the [al-Aqsa Mosque](#) in [Jerusalem](#) (20 July)

Elections held for the [Second Knesset](#) (30 July).

Security Council calls on Egypt to end its blockade of Suez Canal to shipping to and from Israel. Egypt refuses to comply (September 1)

Palestine Conciliation Commission opens another round of talks in Paris with Israeli and Arab delegations (September 13)

Israel offers non-aggression pacts to Arab states, calls for direct negotiations and offers compensation for Arab refugee's property (September 28)

The [Hula Valley](#) reclamation program begins turning swamps into arable lands.

Egged bus transport cooperative is founded.

[David Ben-Gurion](#) presents his government to the Knesset (October 7).

Palestine Conciliation Commission announces failure of the talks (November 21).

[Libya](#) proclaims independence (December 24)

## 1952

Seven armed [terrorists](#) attacked and killed a 19-year-old girl in her home in Beit Yisrael in [Jerusalem](#). (January 1)

The first graduating class of physicians is awarded degrees at [Hebrew University](#). (May 13)

Free Officers carry out Coup d'etat in [Egypt](#); oust King Farouk (23 July)

[Egypt](#) proclaimed Republic (28 July)

Hussein proclaimed Crown Prince following illness of King Talal. Council of regents appointed (11 August)

[Ben-Gurion](#) welcomes Egyptian revolution in Knesset (18 August)

Israel and West Germany sign [Reparations](#) Agreement in Luxembourg (10 September)

President [Chaim Weizman](#) dies (9 November).

[Yitzchak Ben-Tzvi](#) elected President (8 December).

Israel participates in its first Olympic Games in Helsinki, [Finland](#).

[Knesset](#) summoned to approve broader negotiations with West Germany: [Menachem Begin](#) leads stormy demonstration against negotiations (7 January).

[Knesset](#) supports negotiations by 61-50 (9 January).

[Yiddish](#) writers and other Jewish cultural figures are executed in the U.S.S.R. on "Night of the Murdered Poets"

[Germany](#) agrees to provide [Holocaust reparations](#).

Operation Coresh - immigration of [Iranian Jews](#).

## 1953

Egyptian republic proclaimed, Nasser takes over: 1953, 1954

USSR breaks diplomatic relations with Israel (February 12).

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are executed for conspiring to deliver U.S. atomic bomb secrets to the U.S.S.R.

[Ben-Gurion](#) resigns as Prime Minister and is replaced by [Moshe Sharett](#) as Prime Minister and Pinchas Lavon as Defense Minister (7 December).

U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visits [Israel](#) (13 May).

A youngster was killed and three others were wounded in shooting attacks on residential areas in southern [Jerusalem](#). (June 7)

[Terrorists](#) killed a resident of Lod, after throwing hand grenades and spraying gunfire in all directions. On the same night, another group of terrorists attacked a house in Hadera. (June 9)

Terrorists attacked a young couple in their home in Kfar Hess and shot them to death. (June 11)

Relations with USSR restored (20 July).

Israel starts work on Jordan River project. Syria complains to Security Council (2 September)

President Eisenhower appoints Ambassador Eric Johnston to help establish regional water development project based on Jordan River (15 October)

U.S. halts economic aid to Israel until it [halts work](#) on the Jordan River project. Israel complies and aid resumed (20-28 October)

Ben-Gurion resigns and retires to Negev; he is succeeded by Moshe [Sharett](#).

The Academy for Hebrew Language and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) are founded.

## 1954

[Yad Vashem Holocaust museum](#) opens.

"Katzner trial" opens in Jerusalem District Court. (Malkiel Greenwald was accused of libelling Dr. Rudolf Kastner regarding his alleged collaboration with Adolf Eichmann in Hungary, in 1944). (1 January)

USSR vetoes Western draft resolutions at Security Council permitting Israel to resume work on River Jordan project. (22 January)

[Terrorists](#) ambushed a bus traveling from [Eilat](#) to [Tel Aviv](#) at Maale Akrabim, opening fire at short range. The terrorists boarded the bus, and shot each passenger, one by one, murdering 11. (March 17)

USSR vetoes Western draft resolution at Security Council calling on Egypt to comply with 1951 resolution on Suez Canal (20 March)

Colonel Nasser becomes Prime Minister of Egypt (17 April)

Egypt seizes Israeli ship "Bat Galim" at Port Said. (28 September)

Israel offers at the UN non-aggression pact with Arab states (6 October).

Eleven Jews are arrested in Egypt on suspicion of planting bombs around Cairo. Two are hanged. Though Israel denies involvement, it is later learned Israeli Defense Minister Pinhas [Lavon](#) was behind the spy ring.

Stern College for Women, the first liberal arts women's college under Jewish auspices, opens in New York City.

The founding of the Conference of Major Jewish Organizations indicates a galvanization of Jewish lobby in the U.S.

## 1955

Soviet bloc begins first arms sales to [Egypt](#) and [Syria](#).

Two hikers killed by [terrorists](#) in the Judean Desert. (January 2)

[Lavon resigns](#) as Defense Minister amidst controversy over espionage scandal involving Israeli agents who were executed in Egypt (17 February).

[Ben-Gurion](#) returns to government as Defense Minister (21 February)

[Baghdad Pact](#) signed between Turkey and [Iraq](#). (24 February)

Development town of [Dimona](#) is founded.

Following intensified raids into Israel, [IDF](#) raids Egyptian military installations in Gaza (28 February)

One young woman killed and 18 wounded when [terrorists](#) threw hand grenades and opened fire on a crowded wedding celebration in Patish. (March 24)

Israel excluded from participation in Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations (April)

Bar Ilan University, with its emphasis on Jewish heritage studies, opens in Ramat Gan. (May)

Dr. Israel Kastner, a Hungarian Jew, was found guilty by a district court of collaboration with the Nazis; the decision was eventually appealed and overturned for lack of evidence (22 June).

Elections for the [Third Knesset](#), [Ben Gurion](#) again becomes Prime Minister (26 July).

Bulgarian fighter pilots down an El Al civilian airline, killing 58 people



(27 July).

Egyptian-Czechoslovak arms deal announced (27 September).

Arab League rejects Eric Johnston's Jordan River plan (11 October)

Premier [Sharett](#) applies to U.S. for permission to purchase arms (18 October)

Egypt and Syria sign mutual defence treaty (20 October)

[Ben-Gurion](#) again becomes Israel's Prime Minister (2 November)

Nasser objects to terms of Western offer to finance the building of the Aswan Dam.

Israel protests to Security Council, in note dated 22 November, continued Egyptian attacks from Gaza Strip (6 December)

Cairo announces beginning of implementation of defence pacts with Syria and Saudi Arabia (26 December)

## 1956

[Sudan](#) & [Tunisia](#) independence, Pakistan Republic.

Nasser announces new constitution for Egypt and pledges to re-conquer Palestine (18 January)

Ambassador Eban requests Secretary Dulles permission to acquire arms in the U.S. (25 January)

[Egypt](#), [Syria](#) and Saudi Arabia announce plans to coordinate their defence (12 March)

One young woman killed when [terrorists](#) threw 3 hand grenades into her house in [Ashkelon](#). (April 7)

Two killed when terrorists opened fire on a car at Kibbutz Givat Chaim. (April 7)

Three children and one youth worker killed, and five injured, when terrorists opened fire on a [synagogue](#) full of children and teenagers in Shafrir (Kfar Chabad). (April 11)

UN Secretary General tours Middle East in an effort to reestablish armistice. Cease-fire achieved between Israel and Egypt on 19 April and with Jordan on 26 April (April).

Egyptians killed 21-year-old Ro'i Rottenberg from Nahal Oz. (April 29)

[Jordan](#) and [Egypt](#) announce plans to unify their forces (6 May)

Dulles tells NATO in Paris that the U.S. would not sell arms to Israel directly in order to avoid U.S.-USSR confrontation in the Middle East (9 May)

France delivers arms to Israel under secret agreement with tacit U.S. approval (May-October)

[Syria](#) and [Jordan](#) sign military agreement (31 May)

[Nasser](#) elected President of Egypt (24 June)

U.S. refuses aid and credits for [Egypt](#) Aswan High Dam, Britain adopts similar position (20 July)

[Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal](#). (26 July)

[Terrorists](#) killed three [Druze](#) guards in Ein Ofarim. (September 12)

Four archaeologists killed and 16 wounded when [terrorists](#) opened fire from a Jordanian position at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel. (September 23)

[Terrorists](#) killed a girl in the fields of the farming community of Aminadav, near [Jerusalem](#). (September 24)

Five Israeli workers killed in Sdom. (October 4)

[Egypt](#) and USSR reject proposals for international supervision of Suez

Canal (8 October)

Two workers were killed in an orchard of the Neve Hadasah youth village. (October 9)

[Egypt](#), [Syria](#) and [Jordan](#) announce establishment of unified military command for "war of destruction against Israel." (25 October)

[Sinai Campaign](#) launched with Great Britain and France (29 October).

[Kfar Kassem](#) massacre of 47 Arab civilians violating a curfew (29 October).

General Assembly calls for cease-fire in Egypt, withdrawal of foreign troops, restoration of freedom of navigation (2 November)

Tel Aviv University is opened.

End of [Sinai Campaign](#). [Gaza Strip](#) and Sinai occupied (4-5 November).

[General Assembly](#) establishes [United Nations Emergency Force](#) (5 November)

Israel completes occupation of Sinai save for strip along Suez Canal (6 November)

[General Assembly](#) calls on Britain, France and Israel to withdraw from Sinai and Suez Canal zone, President Eisenhower demands Israeli compliance. Premier Bulganin threatens Israel (7 November).

Terrorists opened fire on a train, attacked cars and blew up wells, in the north and center of [Israel](#). six Israelis were wounded. (8 November).

Last British and French troops leave [Egypt](#) (21 December)

Beginning of Israeli forces withdrawal from Sinai (24 December)

**1957**

France helps Israel create nuclear research program in Dimona.

[Eisenhower Doctrine](#) unveiled "to deter Communist aggression in the Middle East area." (January 5)

Israel withdraws to mandatory border with [Egypt](#), holds land strip to Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza Strip (22 January)

U.S. pressure on Israel to withdraw from Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh. General Assembly considers sanctions against Israel (February).

Two civilians killed by [terrorist](#) landmines near Nir Yitzhak. (February 18)

U.S.-Israel understanding on freedom of navigation and UN administration for Gaza Strip (28 February)

Foreign Minister [Meir](#) announces to General Assembly Israel's readiness to withdraw from all Egyptian territories (1 March)

[Israel withdraws](#) from Sinai and [Gaza](#). UN forces (UNEF) along border (6 March).

A shepherd from Kibbutz Beit Govrin was killed by [terrorists](#) in a field near the kibbutz. (8 March).

IDF withdraws to armistice lines (10 March)

[Egypt](#) re-appoints military governor for Gaza (11 March)

[Egypt](#) announces Israel not permitted to navigate through newly reopened Suez Canal (15 March)

Eilat-Beersheba oil pipeline inaugurated (14 April)

Two guards at Kibbutz Mesilot are killed by [terrorists](#) who infiltrated from [Jordan](#). (16 April)

A [terrorist](#) opened fire on a truck in the Arava region, killing a worker. (May 20)

One killed and two wounded when their vehicle struck a landmine in Kibbutz Kisufim. (May 29)

[Ben-Gurion](#) announces in Knesset Israel's acceptance of "[Eisenhower's Doctrine](#)."

Serious border clashes on Israel-Syria border (June)

[Arab boycott](#) of all firms selling goods in Israel.

United States attains world's largest [Jewish population](#).

Two guards of the Israeli Mekorot water company killed are killed in Kibbutz Beit Govrin. (August 23)

Mentally deranged man throws a hand grenade into the [Knesset](#). Five ministers are injured (29 October).

[Huleh](#) swamp drainage project completed (31 October).

Israel completes [Huleh](#) reclamation project (November)

A member of Kibbutz Gadot was killed in the kibbutz fields. (December 21)

## 1958

Supreme Court verdict in Kastner trial (15 January).

United Arab Republic established through merger of Egypt and Syria. (1 February)

[Terrorists](#) killed a resident of Moshav Yanov near Kfar Yona. (11 February)

[Jordan](#) and [Iraq](#) form Arab Federation (14 February)

[Yemen](#) joins [United Arab Republic](#) (8 March)

[Syria](#) fires at Israeli workers engaged in widening Jordan River bed (20

March)

The [Knesset](#) passes the first [Basic Law](#) dealing with the electoral system.

[Terrorists](#) lying in ambush shot and killed two people in Tel Lachish.  
(April 5)

Four Israeli police officers and a UN officer killed in a Jordanian attack on [Mt. Scopus](#) in [Jerusalem](#). (26 May)

Iraqi monarchy is overthrown, King killed. Civil war in [Lebanon](#). [Jordan](#) and Lebanon appeal for U.S. military aid. (14 July)

U.S. marines land in Beirut; British paratroopers land in Jordan (15 July)

Arab Federation dissolved by Hussein (2 August)

First International Bible Quiz held in [Jerusalem](#) (4 August).

U.S. ends its military intervention in Lebanon (25 October).

Syrian artillery shell Israeli settlements in Huleh Valley (7 November)

Ambassador Eban again proclaims Israel's readiness to compensate Arab refugees even before peace settlement. (17 November).

Syrian terrorists killed the wife of the British air attache in [Israel](#), who was staying at the guesthouse of the Italian Convent on the Mt. of the Beatitudes. (17 November).

A shepherd killed and 31 civilians wounded in an artillery attack on Kibbutz Gonen. (December 3)

## 1959

Heichal Shlomo - seat of the [Chief Rabbinate](#) - is inaugurated.

[Fatah](#) is established by [Yasser Arafat](#) and associates. (January)

A shepherd from Kibbutz Lehavot Habashan was killed. (January 23)



Three civilians killed by a [terrorist](#) landmine at Moshav Zavdiel. (1 February)

Egypt detains Liberian Ship "Captain Manolis" in Suez Canal with cargo from Israel to Ceylon and Malaya. (26 February)

Egypt detains German ship "Lialot" in Suez Canal with Israeli cargo to Malaya and Phillipines. (13 March)

Iraq withdraws from Baghdad Pact. Pact is re-named CENTO on August 18. (24 March)

A guard was killed at Kibbutz Ramat Rahel. (April 15)

Two hikers shot and killed at close range at [Masada](#). (April 27)

Egypt detains Danish ship "Inge Toft," confiscates cargo destined from Israel to Hong Kong and Japan (21 May).

[Bedouin terrorists](#) killed a paratroop reconnaissance officer near Nitzana. (September 6)

[Bedouins](#) opened fire on an army bivouac in the [Negev](#), killing an [IDF](#) officer, Captain Yair Peled. (September 8)

A shepherd from Kibbutz Heftziba was killed near Kibbutz Yad Hana. (3 October).

[Egypt](#) tells [UN](#) that Israel will be permitted to use Suez Canal after [Palestine refugee problem](#) is settled (5 October).

Elections for the [Fourth Knesset](#) (3 November).

[Egypt](#) detains Greek ship "Astypalea" in Suez Canal. [Nasser](#) disavows previous promises to UN Secretary General to allow passage of Israeli cargo on non-Israeli ships. (19 December)

A series of riots with an ethnic-socio-economic basis takes places in a [Haifa](#) suburb, Wadi Salib.

The [Navy's](#) first submarine, the Tanin (crocodile), arrives in [Haifa](#).

[Habima](#) is declared the national theater of Israel.

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## Modern Israel & the Diaspora

(1960-1969)

### 1960

[Egypt](#) announces USSR will finance second stage of Aswan High Dam (18 January)

[Jordan](#) opposes in [Arab League](#) creation of a Palestinian entity (20 February)

[Ben-Gurion](#) meets with President Eisenhower at White House (10 March)

[Terrorists](#) killed a resident of [Ashkelon](#). (April 26)

[Adolf Eichmann](#) is [captured](#) in Argentina by Israeli agents of the [Mossad](#), who bring him to Israel for trial (23 May).

[Ben-Gurion](#) announces in Knesset capture of [Eichman](#) (23 May)

Shali declares that Iran recognizes Israel de facto. Egypt breaks its ties with Iran on 25 July (23 July)

Theodore Heuss is the first German president to visit Israel.

Founding of the [Jewish Reconstructionist movement](#) (as a distinct denomination; [Mordecai Kaplan](#)): 1960s.

Hadassah Hospital and Hebrew University Medical School is inaugurated at Ein Kerem, Jerusalem.

Letters from the [Bar Kochba](#) archive are discovered in a dig in the Judean desert.

## 1961

Operation Yachin bring [Moroccan Jews](#) to Israel.

The "Egoz," a ship bringing Moroccan Jews to Israel - sinks (11 January).

[IDF](#) raids Syrian positions east of Sea of Galilee, following Syrian shelling. (16 March)

Security Council condemns Israel for Galilee raid (9 April)

[Eichman trial](#) begins at Beit Ha'am in Jerusalem (11 April).

[Israel Beer](#), military historian and advisor to the Minister of Defense, is arrested for spying for the U.S.S.R. and is sentenced to 15 years in jail.

Elections for the [Fifth Knesset](#) (15 August).

Civil war in Yemen - Egypt and Saudi Arabia intervene (September)

[Syrian](#) military coup d'etat breaks up the UAR (September 28).

[Eichman](#) found guilty (11 December).

[Eichman](#) sentenced to death by hanging (15 December).

## 1962

[Terrorists](#) fired on an Egged bus on the way to [Eilat](#); one passenger was wounded. (April 12)

[Adolf Eichmann](#) is executed in Israel for his part in the [Holocaust](#) (May 31).

[President Ben-Zvi](#) dies in office and [Zalman Shazar](#) is elected Israel's third president.

[Haifa University](#) is opened.

Archeological excavations begin at [Masada](#), under the direction of [Prof. Yigal Yadin](#).

United States' sale of Hawk missiles to Israel is concluded.

## 1963

Pro-Egyptian Colonel Arif overthrows Qassim regime in Iraq (8 February)

Officers group connected with Ba'ath party takes over power in Syria (8 March)

Knesset calls on West Germany to forbid its scientists to aid Egyptian missiles and arms development (20 March).

Egypt, Syria and Iraq agree on new federation; also call for liberation of Palestine (17 April)

President [Yitzchak Ben-Tzvi](#) dies (23 April).

[Zalman Shazar](#) is elected President (21 May).

[David Ben-Gurion](#) resigns as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and retires. He is replaced by [Levi Eshkol](#) (16 June).

Prime Minister [Levi Eshkol](#) presents his government to the [Knesset](#) (24 June).

Nasser renounces Egypt's federation agreement with Syria and Iraq, and denounces Syria's Ba'ath party. (22 July)

Military coup in Iraq; Arif becomes President (18 November)

## 1964

Student Struggle for Soviet Union founded following U.S. march to protest Soviet anti-Jewish policies.

Pope Paul VI visits Israel (5 January).

United Arab Summit in Cairo establish Unified Military Commando to prepare for war against Israel (January 14).

The [Palestine Liberation Organization \(PLO\)](#) is established in East Jerusalem (May 28).

National Water Carrier completed, begins operations, bringing water from [Lake Kinneret](#) in the north to the semi-arid south. (June)

[Eshkol](#) ends two days of talks with President Johnson in White House. (2 June)

[Ze'ev Jabotinsky](#)'s remains are interred on Mt. Herzl (9 July).

Arab Summit conference in Alexandria agrees on measures to divert Jordan River headwaters (5-11 September)

## 1965

President Lyndon B. Johnson signs into law the Immigration Act of 1965, abolishing the national origins quota system.

[Palestinian terrorists](#) attempted to bomb the National Water Carrier - the first attack carried out by the [PLO](#)'s [Fatah](#) faction. (January 1)

West Germany announces suspension of arms sales to Israel (12 February)

The [Israel Museum in Jerusalem](#) is founded as the country's national museum (May 11)

[Israel](#) and [West Germany](#) establish diplomatic relations (12 May).

[Eli Cohen](#), an Israeli agent, is hanged in Damascus (18 May).



Jordanian Legionnaires fired on the neighborhood of Musara in [Jerusalem](#), killing two civilians and wounding four. (May 31)

[Syria](#) declares: Only solution for Palestine - elimination of Israel (1 June)

A [Fatah](#) cell planted explosives near [Beit Guvrin](#), and on the railroad tracks to [Jerusalem](#) near Kfar Battir. (July 5)

Chief of Staff [Rabin](#) says Israel has effectively deterred Arab States from diverting Jordan River headwaters (15 July)

[Teddy Kollek](#) becomes Mayor of [Jerusalem](#); he is re-elected six times and serves 28 years.

Elections for the [Sixth Knesset](#) (2 November).

U.S. confirms sale of tanks to Jordan (29 December).

## 1966

The new [Knesset](#) building is inaugurated.

Konrad Adenauer visits Israel (2 May).

Two Israelis killed when their jeep hit a [terrorist](#) landmine in Northern Galilee. Tracks led into [Syria](#). (May 16)

[Eshkol](#) declares in Knesset Israel will not be first to introduce nuclear weapons to Middle East; calls for limitations on regional arms build-up. (18 May)

U.S. confirms sale of jet fighters to Israel (19 May)

Two soldiers and 1 civilian killed when their truck struck a [terrorist](#) landmine near Almagor. (July 13)

Serious clashes between Israel and Syria, followed by inconclusive Security Council debate (25 July)

Syria and Egypt sign mutual defence treaty providing for joint command

(4 November)

Israel raids Samu village following incursions from Jordan (14 November)

The Coca-Cola Company announces it will begin producing soft drinks in Israel in defiance of the [the Arab Boycott](#).

[Shmuel Yosef Agnon](#) receives the [Nobel Prize](#) in Literature with another Jewish author, Nelly Sachs (10 December).

## 1967

Heavy fighting along Israel-[Syria](#) borders (January)

Israeli aircraft shoot down 7 Syrian Migs (7 April)

Security Council deplores Arab attacks on Israel (11 April)

Nasser declares alert in Egypt and bolsters his forces in Sinai (14 May)

Egyptian forces continue pouring into Sinai (15 May)

Egyptian President Nasser orders UN forces to evacuate the [Gaza Strip](#) and Sinai (17 May).

UN Emergency Force withdrawn at Egypt's request. Israel declares partial mobilization (19 May)

Partial mobilization of forces declared in Israel (20 May).

Egypt declares the [Straits of Tiran closed](#) to Israeli shipping. (22 May).

[Eshkol](#) warns Egypt of gravity of blockade (23 May)

Security Council adjourns, having failed to take any action on Middle East crisis (23 May)

Egypt and Jordan sign mutual defence pact in Cairo (30 May)

National Unity Government formed; [Moshe Dayan](#) appointed Defense

Minister (June 1).

Israeli air force attacks Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi air force bases, in pre-emptive strike; Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian air forces neutralized. [IDF](#) ground forces attack Egyptian forces in Sinai and the [Gaza strip](#). Eshkol conveys message to Hussein through UN Chief of Staff in Jerusalem that Israel has no intentions of attacking Jordan. At 10:20 Jordan launches attack on Israel. Following Jordanian artillery and small arms attacks and a Jordanian incursion into the DMZ in Jerusalem, IDF forces commence operations against Jordanian military positions in Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem (5 June).

[The Six-Day War](#) reunites [Jerusalem](#) under Israeli control. IDF liberates Judea and Samaria (June 7).

IDF completes deployment in Sinai (including the [Gaza Strip](#)). Cease-fire declared with Egypt and Jordan (8 June).

IDF forces move against Syrian forces on the [Golan Heights](#) (9 June).

President Nasser resigns, withdraws resignation some hours later (9 June).

IDF completes deployment in the [Golan Heights](#); cease-fire declared with Syria. USSR and other East European nations, except Rumania, sever diplomatic ties with Israel (10 June).

Israel announces it will not withdraw to 1949 armistice lines before peace is achieved by direct negotiations (12 June)

President Johnson Outlines [5 point U.S. peace plan](#) (19 June)

[Knesset](#) passes the [Protection of Holy Places Law](#) (27 June).

Israel proclaims unification of Jerusalem (28 June)

Draft resolutions denouncing Israel as aggressor, calling for evacuation of liberated territory are rejected by the General Assembly. (June-June)

[Arab summit in Khartoum](#) state: No negotiations with Israel, no peace with Israel and no recognition of Israel. (August)

Open Bridges policy across the Jordan River bridges, for goods and people, is instituted.

Arab summit conference in Khartum proclaims policy of no peace, no recognition and no negotiations with Israel (1 September)

Sea-to-sea missiles fired from Egyptian missile boats sink Israeli destroyer "Eilat" (21 October).

Israeli artillery destroys Egyptian oil refineries in Suez (25 October)

[UN General Assembly Resolution 242](#) is adopted. (November 22)

Ben Gurion University of the Negev is opened.

## 1968

[Egypt's War of Attrition against Israel: 1968-70.](#)

Polish government outlaws Jewish language and institutions.

Submarine Dakar disappears at sea (27 January).

Eshkol ends two days of talks with President Johnson in Texas (7 February)

[Nasser](#) proclaims three stage doctrine of struggle against Israel (12 March)

First [Jerusalem Day](#) celebrated (26 May).

Prime Minister [Levi Eshkol](#) declares that the Jordan River is Israel's security border (22 June).

[Labor party](#) is formed from the union of [Mapai](#), [Ahdut Ha'avodah](#) and [Rafi](#).

[PLO's](#) Palestinian National Council adopt [covenant](#) calling for Israel's destruction (17 July).

The [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#) carries out the first hijacking, diverting an El Al flight to Algiers. 32 Jewish passengers were held hostage for 5 weeks. (22 July)

One killed and seventy-one wounded by three bombs that exploded in Tel Aviv. (4 September)

Hijacking for El Al aircraft en route to [Algeria](#). (October)

Foreign Minister [Eban](#) offers nine point peace plan at UN General Assembly. [Egypt](#) rejects plan and demands that Ambassador Jarring work out a timetable for Israeli withdrawal from disputed areas (8 October)

Fighting breaks out again along Suez Canal, Suez oil refineries again hit (27 October).

Israel allows return to disputed areas thousands of refugees who fled to Jordan in Six Day War (19 November)

Twelve killed and fifty-two injured by a car bomb in the Mahaneh Yehuda market, Jerusalem. (22 November)

Heavy fighting erupts on Israel-Jordan borders (2 December)

Israel aircraft attack Iraqi artillery units in Jordan (4 December)

Arab terrorists attack Israeli airliner in Athens (26 December)

U.S. [announces sale of Phantom jets to Israel](#) (27 December)

IDF raids Beirut airport, destroying 13 airliners without loss of life (28 December)

First television broadcast in Israel.

Jews return to [Gush Etzion](#), abandoned after its capture by the Jordanians in 1948.

Jews return to [Hebron](#), abandoned after the Jewish massacres in 1929.

[War of Attrition](#) is initiated by Egypt and Jordan, causing heavy casualties on both sides.

President Johnson announces that Israel will be allowed to purchase fifty Phantom jets.

## 1969

Israeli airliner attacked in Zurich (18 February)

Two killed and twenty injured by a bomb detonated in a crowded market in Jerusalem (21 February)

[Levi Eshkol](#) dies suddenly (26 February).

[Yasser Arafat](#) elected chairman of the [PLO](#) (February).

[Golda Meir](#) becomes Prime Minister after Eshkol's death (7 March)

Soviet missiles installed in Egypt, following announcement by Nasser that Egypt has completed rehabilitation of its army and is moving to stage of active defense (19 April).

Egypt repudiates cease-fire along Suez Canal (23 April)

Jordan forbids terrorist raids against Israel from its territory, following Israel warning and raids (11 May)

UN Secretary General U Thant proclaims that war of attrition is taking place along Suez Canal (7 July)

Israel airforce begins bombing targets inside Egypt (20 July)

Israel repels Syrian attack in [Golan Heights](#) (31 July)

[Al-Aqsa Mosque](#) damaged by arson (August 21).

Nasser calls for all out war against Israel (23 August)

American airliner hijacked to Damascus; two Israeli passengers detained



(29 August)

Coup d'etat in Libya overthrows monarchy. Moammer Qaddafi heads Revolutionary Command Council (1 September).

Secret U.S.-USSR talks on Middle East peace. Talks fail when Nasser rejects plan (October)

Israel proposes home rule for West Bank, retaining responsibility for security (13 October)

Four killed and twenty wounded by terrorist bombs in five apartments. (22 October)

Elections to the [Seventh Knesset](#) (28 October).

U.S. Secretary of State Rogers announces [American Plan for peace](#) in the Middle East. (Dec. 9)

Israel rejects Rogers plan (12 December).

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### 1970

Heavy fighting on [Golan Heights](#) (2 February)

[Palestinian terrorists](#) blow up Swissair jet in mid air (22 February)

USSR steps up missile shipment to [Egypt](#) (March)

[Israel](#) announces Soviet pilots are flying operational missions for Egyptian airforce (April)

Israel warns against installation of Soviet missiles close to Suez Canal (9 May)

Terrorists attack schoolbus, killing 12 (9 of whom were children), and wounding 24 in Avivim, Israel. (22 May)

Secretary Rogers discloses U.S. initiative to end [war of attrition](#) along Suez Canal for 90 days and resumption of stalled Jarring mission (25 June)

[Egypt](#), after [Nasser](#) visit to Moscow, accepts U.S. initiative (23 July)

[Jordan](#) accepts U.S. initiative (26 July)

Israel accepts U.S. initiative, is assured of continued [military and economic aid](#) from the U.S. (4 August)

Cease-fire goes into effect on Suez Canal (7 August)

[Egypt](#) violates cease-fire by moving missiles into "stand-still" zone. Israel protests to U.S. (7 August)

American-brokered cease-fire ends [War of Attrition](#) with [Egypt](#) (8 August).

Refuseniks are sentenced to death in the USSR for hijacking an airplane.

Heavy fighting between Jordanian army and Palestinian terrorists. Syria invades Jordan. U.S. moves Sixth Fleet to Eastern Mediterranean (September)

[Black September](#): clashes between Jordanian forces and the PLO, in an attempt by the PLO to take control of the country, end in Jordanian victory; the PLO regroups in Lebanon.

Three airliners holding over 400 passengers were hijacked, and taken to the Jordanian airport by the PFLP. The hostages were released in exchange for terrorists held in Germany, Switzerland, and England. (6 September)

[Hussein](#) proclaims martial law in Jordan and installs military governments to fight terrorists (16 September)

Prime Minister [Meir](#) meets President Nixon. Israel refuses to return to

Jarring talks until Egyptian missiles are withdrawn (18 September)

Arab heads of state agree on formula to end hostilities in Jordan (27 September)

President [Nasser](#) dies, succeeded by [Anwar Sadat](#) (28 September)

UN General Assembly calls for 90 day extension of cease-fire and resumption of Jarring talks (5 November).

[Palestinian terrorists](#) hijack a number of international airliners.

## 1971

Black Panther movement becomes active in Israel among North African Jews.

Sadat formally informs Jarring Egypt willing to envisage peace arrangement with Israel - on his conditions. (15 February)

Israel informs [Jarring](#) it is keen to negotiate peace arrangements with Arab states but cannot give prior commitments on borders and other items to be negotiated. Jarring mission deadlocked (26 February)

Fighting erupts again in Jordan between the King's forces and Palestinian terrorists (April)

Egypt, Syria and Libya sign agreement to form Federation of Arab Republics (17 April)

Egypt and USSR sign 15-year treaty of friendship and co-operation. (27 May)

Sadat is granted full powers by Arab Socialist Union to take action to recover Arab lands from Israel. (23 July)

Syria breaks off diplomatic ties with Jordan following border clashes (12 August).

Jordanian Premier Wasfi Tal assassinated in Cairo by Palestinian terrorists. (28 November)

[Prime Minister Golda Meir](#) meets President Nixon in Washington (2 December)

## 1972

Ordination of first [\(Reform\)](#) Jewish [woman rabbi](#) in U.S.

Hussein announces plan to make Jordan federal state. Israel, Egypt, Syria, Libya reject the plan (15 March)

Egypt breaks off diplomatic relations with Jordan because of Hussein's federal plan. (6 April)

Special paratrooper unit of the [IDF](#), dressed as Arabs, free hostages on a hijacked Sabena plane in Lod.

Terrorists murder 27 people (including 21 Christian pilgrims from Puerto Rico) at Lod Airport. (May 9)

Sadat terminates services of Soviet military advisers (18 July)

Stepped up Soviet military shipments to Syria, including missiles for the defense of Damascus (September)

Eleven Israeli athletes are murdered at the [Munich Olympic Games](#). (September 5)

Israel strikes at terrorist bases in Syria and Lebanon (15 October)

West Germany releases Munich killers after German airliner is hijacked (29 October)

USSR agrees to restore missiles to Egypt's air defence system (1 November)

## 1973

[Conservative](#) Movement's Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards (CJLS) of the Rabbinical Assembly approves minority opinion allowing

women to count in a minyan; by 1996, fully 83% of Conservative synagogues counted women in their minyan.

Prime Minister [Meir](#) meets President Nixon in Washington (1 March)

Palestinian terrorists kill U.S. Ambassador, his deputy head of mission, and Belgian diplomat in Khartoum (1 March)

[Sadat](#) proclaims himself military governor of [Egypt](#), and declares martial law (28 March)

[Ephraim Kazar](#) becomes Israel's fourth president.(May 24)

Thirteen Syrian MIG-21 planes downed in aerial battle off Syrian coast. (September 13)

[The Yom Kippur War](#) begins with Egyptian and Syrian forces attacking across 1967 ceasefire lines ([Egypt](#) crosses Suez Canal, Syrian forces attack Golan Heights). (October 6)

First naval battle in history fought with only missiles between Israel and Syria. All Syrian ships sunk; no Israeli losses. (October 6-7)

Syrian attack contained (7 October)

Israeli counter-offensive in Sinai fails (8 October)

Syrian forces driven back in Golan. Israel stabilizes new line in Sinai (10 October)

IDF advances to within 28 miles from Damascus (12 October)

IDF repels Jordanian and Iraqi forces fighting with Syrians in the Golan Heights (13 October)

First [IDF](#) forces cross Suez Canal (October 15).

Countering massive sea and air lift of Soviet arms to [Egypt](#) and Syria, U. S. starts air lift to Israel (15 October)



Israel's military attache in Washington is killed by terrorists.

Arab Oil Embargo announced. Arab oil producing states announce 10 percent reduction in oil production and impose total embargo on U.S. and Netherlands. (October 17)

Sadat proposes a cease-fire (17 October)

President Nixon asks Congress to appropriate \$2.2 billion for emergency aid to Israel (19 October)

Israel expands its bridgehead on West Bank of Suez Canal, besieging Third Egyptian Army (20 October)

[UN Resolution 338](#) is passed. First cease-fire declared on southern front. Fighting continues (October 22)

Second cease-fire declared on southern front; cease-fire on northern front. (October 24)

President Nixon orders world-wide alert as fear of Soviet military intervention on Egypt's behalf mounts. (25 October)

Security Council establishes UNEF to supervise cease fire. (25 October)

Premier Meir arrives in Washington for talks with President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger (31 October)

Truce agreement (6 point agreement for the stabilisation of the cease-fire) signed with [Egypt](#) at "Kilometer 101." (November 11)

Exchange of POWs with [Egypt](#). (November 15)

Governement decides ot set up state commission of inquiry (Agrnat Commission) into the beginnning of the war. (November 18)

[David Ben-Gurion](#) dies. (December 1)

[Geneva Peace conference](#) on Middle East opens. (December 21)

Election of the [Eighth Knesset](#). (December 31)

## 1974

Shuttle diplomacy by Dr. Kissinger to bring about Israel-Egypt separation of forces agreement. (January)

Israel-Egypt separation of forces agreement is signed in kilometer 101 on the Cairo-Suez road (18 January)

[Sinai Disengagement Agreement](#) signed between Israel and [Egypt](#). (January 18)

Continued war of attrition along the Israel-Syria cease-fire line (March)

Israeli army deployed along new lines in Sinai in accordance with disengagement agreement (4 March)

Arab states lift oil embargo on the U.S. (18 March)

Golda Meir's government resigns (10 April)

In Kiryat Shemona, Israel, 18 are killed, 8 of whom were children, by PFLP terrorists who detonated their explosives during a failed rescue attempt by Israeli authorities. (11 April)

Terrorists murder 26 people (22 of them children) at a school in Maalot. (May 15)

[Golan Heights Disengagement Agreement](#) signed between Syria and Israel. (May 31)

[Golda Meir's](#) government resigns and [Yitzhak Rabin](#) becomes Prime Minister. (June 3)

U.S. President Nixon visits Israel. First visit from U.S. president. (June 16)

IDF completes its withdrawal from the "Syrian bulge" in the framework of the Israel-Syria Disengagement of Forces agreement (June 18)

[Rabin](#) proclaims there is no room for another state between Israel and Jordan (July 1)

U.S.-Israel [Binational Science Foundation](#) is founded.

Ordination of first [Reconstructionist](#) Jewish [woman rabbi](#), Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. She serves a joint [Conservative-Reconstructionist](#)-affiliated congregation, making her the first woman rabbi to serve a Conservative congregation.

President Ford assures Israel the U.S. will honor its commitments (August 10)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) pays an official visit to Washington, holds talks with President Ford and senior administration officials. (September 10-13)

The [General Assembly](#) votes 105 against 4 to [invite the PLO](#) to participate in the debate on the "Palestine question." (October 14)

Arab summit conference in Rabat determines that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian Arabs and removes Jordan from a future role in the West Bank (October 26-30)

Reacting to the Rabat decisions, Israel announces there will be no talks with the PLO (November 1)

Arafat before the General Assembly calls for the liquidation of Israel and the establishment of a "secular democratic Palestine" (November 13)

An IAF helicopter crashes in Haifa bay. The crew survives. (November 18)

UNESCO condemns Israel for its archaeological digs in Jerusalem. (November 20)

[PLO](#) receives observer status at the [UN](#). (November 22)

71 Senators condemn recent UN resolutions against Israel (December 10)

**1975**

Terrorists murder 18 civilians and three [IDF](#) soldiers in an attack on a [Tel Aviv](#) hotel. (March 6)

Talks with Secretary Kissinger are suspended. President Ford announces a review of U.S. arms deliveries to Israel (March 22)

Sadat announces the opening of the Suez Canal on June 5 (March 29).

President Ford pledges another effort for peace in the Middle East (April 10).

The start of the 1975-76 civil war in [Lebanon](#) (April 13).

Israel and the European Economic Community sign an agreement giving Israel Associate Membership (May 11).

Terrorist bomb kills 15 people (including two children) at Zion Square in [Jerusalem](#). (July 4)

The Suez Canal is reopened for navigation (June 5)

Rabin holds talks in Washington with President Ford (June 10-11)

“Black Muslims” in America cultivate Sunni recognition.

President Gerald Ford signs legislation including the [Jackson-Vanik Amendment](#), which ties U.S. trade benefits to the Soviet Union to [freedom of emigration for Jews](#).

Civil War starts in [Lebanon](#) (1975-1992).

First residents move into [Yamit](#) (September)

Second Sinai agreement signed with [Egypt](#). Israel-Egypt interim agreement is signed in Jerusalem and Alexandria. An Israel-U.S. protocol is also signed. (September 1)

Israel becomes an associate member of the European Common Market.

Israel signs the military protocol after U.S. Congress approves U.S. presence in Sinai. Abu Rudeis oil field handed to [Egypt](#) (October 10)

Joint Israel-Egypt military commission meets for the first time in Sinai (October 22)

[United Nations adopts resolution equating Zionism with racism.](#) (November 1)

[UN General Assembly](#) passes a resolution declaring [Zionism to be a form of racism](#). (November 10)

Terrorist bomb in [Jerusalem](#) kills seven. (November 13)

Good Fence Policy instituted between [Israel](#) and [Lebanon](#).

## 1976

The Security Council opens Middle East debate. PLO invites, Israel boycotts the sessions. (January 12)

The U.S. vetoes a draft resolution in the Security Council. The discussion ends with no resolution being adopted.

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) pays an official visit to the U.S., addresses a joint session of Congress (January 26-29)

IDF completes withdrawal under the Interim Agreement (February 22).

The U.S. vetoes an anti-Israel draft resolution at the conclusion of a Security Council discussion on the situation in the West Bank (March 22).

[Land Day](#) is marked by [Israeli Arabs](#) for the first time. (March 30)

Elections are held in 24 municipal and local councils in the West Bank (April 12).

Air France airliner enroute from Tel Aviv to Paris is hijacked after a stop over in Athens. It is flown to [Entebbe](#) (June 27).

Israel mounts dramatic rescue of hostages taken to [Entebbe](#), Uganda. (July 3-4)

Israel and the U.S. initial an agreement for the supply to Israel of two nuclear reactors. (August 5)

Terrorists attack El Al passengers in Istanbul airport (August 11).

At its sixty-sixth session held in Cairo, the [Arab League](#) Council accepts Palestine, as represented by the PLO, as a full member of the Arab League equal to all other members (September).

The General Assembly adopts a resolution for a nuclear free zone in the Middle East (December 10).

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) submits his government's resignation. (December 21)

## 1977

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) visits Washington for talks with President Carter (March 7-9)

President Carter announces new U.S. policy for the Middle East (March 9)

[Yitzhak Rabin](#) announces his resignation as [Labor Party](#) leader following allegations of foreign currency violations. (April 7)

[Maccabi Tel Aviv](#) basketball team wins European championship for the first time. (April 7)

A Yassur helicopter crashes during exercise near [Jericho](#) and 54 paratroops are killed. (May 10)

The United States adopts [anti-boycott legislation](#).

Likud party wins elections held for the [Ninth Knesset](#). (May 17)

[Likud](#) forms government after Knesset elections, end of 30 years of [Labor](#) rule. [Menachem Begin](#) becomes Prime Minister.



The U.S. rejects Israeli request to sell 24 Kfir fighter-bombers to Ecuador. (July 6)

Sadat says he will end the state of war with Israel only after complete Israeli withdrawal and will consider a peace treaty 5 years after last Israeli soldier leaves the territories. (July 13)

Prime Minister Begin and President Carter confer in Washington and reach agreement on the need for Israel to negotiate with the Arab states in the framework of a Geneva conference in the fall of 1977. (July 19-21)

Carter says that if PLO accepts Resolution 242 in its entirety, the U.S. would then start discussions with this organization. (August 8)

Israel rejects any idea of PLO participation in the peace negotiations even if it accepts Resolution 242. (August 9)

U.S. and the Soviet Union issue a joint communique on the Middle East, which is welcomed by Arabs and criticized by Israel. (October 1)

Israel government launches new economic program, floats the pound and makes it freely convertible, controls on foreign currency abolished. (October 28).

Israeli jets attack PLO base near Tyre. President Sadat announces his readiness to come to Jerusalem to address the Knesset. (November 9)

Begin broadcasts to the Egyptian people and invites Sadat to Jerusalem for peace talks. (November 11)

Begin sends written invitation to Sadat to come to Jerusalem. Sadat says his trip is a holy mission. (November 15)

Visit of [Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem](#). (November 19)

After praying at the al Aksa mosque Egyptian President Sadat [addresses the Knesset](#) calling for Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian state. (November 20)

Sadat meets with Knesset factions and in a press conference with Begin

calls on Israel to make drastic decisions to reciprocate his visit. Begin-Sadat agreed communique says "no more wars." Sadat leaves for Cairo. (November 21)

[Egypt](#) severs diplomatic relations with Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen in retaliation for their decision to suspend relations with [Egypt](#) in protest against Sadat's initiative. The "rejectionist" Arab states conclude a 5-day summit meeting in Tripoli. (December 5)

Cairo conference opens. PM Begin arrives in U.S. for talks with President Carter on the Israel peace plan. (December 14)

Begin and Carter confer in Washington. Sadat invites Begin for talks with him in [Egypt](#) (December 16-17).

[Prime Minister Menachem Begin](#) confers with [Egyptian President Sadat](#) in Ismailiya, [Egypt](#). (December 25)

Ismailiya summit concluded with a joint Begin-Sadat press conference. Disagreement over the Palestinian issue prevented a joint communique. (December 26).

Carter praises Begin peace plan, but prefers a Palestinian homeland or entity linked to Jordan. (December 28)

U.S. Israel [Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund](#) (BARD) and the [Binational Industrial R&D](#) (BIRD) Foundation are established.

## 1978

Karnei Shomron settled by [Gush Emunim](#). (January 1)

Carter and Sadat meet in Aswan, issue the "Aswan proclamation" calling for the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their participation in the determination of their future. (January 4)

Carter administration will propose to Congress a package deal for the sale of jet plans to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. (February 2)

U.S. threatens to withdraw Israel request for jet planes if Congress blocks sale to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. (February 15)

Arab terrorists hijack buses on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road leaving 37 civilians dead and scores injured. Begin postpones his U.S. visit and Weizman returns home. (March 11)

PLO forces flee Southern Lebanon. Beirut calls on UN to ward off an Israeli attack, U.S. declines to cite PLO as responsible for the bus attack. (March 13)

[Israel Defense Force](#) crosses the Lebanese border, seizes a strip of 7 miles along the border. Begin says IDF will remain in Lebanon until an agreement reached ensuring the area no longer serve as terrorist base. (March 14).

[Operation Litani](#) launched in southern [Lebanon](#) (March 16)

[IDF](#) takes over entire Southern Lebanon to the Litani River as U.S. seeks Security Council Resolution that will dispatch an international force to replace the IDF. Security Council adopts Resolution 425 calling for immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon and the stationing of a UN force there. (March 19)

Begin and Carter hold two days of talks in White House. U.S. and Israel are in disagreement over a number of issues. UN forces arrive in Southern Labnon. (March 21-22).

[IDF](#) starts withdrawl from Lebanon (April 11)

Peace Now is founded.

[Yizhak Navon](#) become Israel's fifth president. (April 19)

[Yiddish](#) writer [Isaac Bashevis Singer](#) receives [Nobel Prize](#).

The Diaspora Museum opens in [Tel Aviv](#) (May 15)

Senate approves the sale of warplanes to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Israel expresses its regret, Arab leaders are pleased. (May 16)

Egypt transmits to Israel its Six Point Peace Plan based on the return of Gaza to Egypt and the West Bank to Jordan. Israel rejects the plan. (July 9)

[Camp David Accords](#) include framework for comprehensive peace in the Middle East and proposal for Palestinian self-government.

The Camp David conference ends in the signing, at the White House, of two [agreements](#): the first dealing with an Israel-Egypt peace treaty and the restoration of Sinai to the latter; the second, a framework agreement establishing a format for negotiations on a five-year autonomy regime in the [West Bank](#) and [Gaza](#) region. Israel-Egypt peace talks to begin shortly with the aim of signing the treaty no later than 17 December. (September 6-17)

The Israel Government approves the Camp David agreements by an 11-2 vote. Commerce and Industry Minister Hurwitz resigns. (September 25)

The Knesset approves the Camp David agreement by a vote of 84 for, 19 against, 17 abstentions. (September 27)

Opening of the talks at Blair House on the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. Talks run into difficulties over the linkage between the treaty and developments in the West Bank and Gaza; oil supply for Israel, a target date for the establishment of the autonomy and Egypt's demands for early Israeli withdrawal. (October 12)

President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin win the Nobel Peace prize. (October 27).

The Israel Government adopts the text of the Peace Treaty, but Egypt introduces new demands regarding the stages of withdrawal from Sinai and the oil rights Israel is to have on wells it discovered and developed in Sinai. (November 21)

American neo-Nazis receive permission to march in Skokie. After Supreme Court denies Skokie's request to cancel the march, the Nazis hold a rally in Marquette Park, Chicago instead.

[Natan Sharansky](#) is convicted of espionage and receives a 13 year sentence.

[Prime Minister Begin](#) and [Egyptian President Sadat](#) are awarded the

Nobel Peace Prize. (December 10)

## 1979

JTS Faculty Senate tables issue of ordaining women because of "provoking unprecedented divisions . . . . The bitter divergence of opinion threatens to inflict irreparable damage."

A revolution in [Iran](#) forces the Shah to flee and an Islamic Republic is created under Ayatollah Khomeini. Americans are taken hostage and held for 444 days in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

Begin-Carter talks in the White House. After initial serious disagreement, a last minute solution is reached on some remaining issues. (March 1-4)

President Carter visits Israel and wins additional concessions from Israel. (March 10-13)

President Sadat accepts the last minute changes brought from Jerusalem by President Carter, thus paving the way for the signing of the peace treaty. (March 14)

The Israel Government approves the text of the peace treaty. (March 19)

The Knesset approves the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, by a vote of 95 for, 18 against, 2 abstentions, 3 absent. (March 22)

[Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel](#) signed in Washington, D.C. (March 26)

[Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty signed](#) and Arab relations with Egypt are severed.

Prime Minister [Begin](#) pays an official visit to Cairo, meets with President [Sadat](#). (April 2-3).

The first Israeli vessel flying the Israeli flag sails through the Suez Canal. President Carter again terms Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria an obstacle to peace and contrary to international law. (April 30)

El Arish is handed over to Egypt within the implementation of the first

phase of Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Israeli and Egyptian negotiators meet in Beersheva for the first round of the autonomy talks in the presence of Secretary of State Vance. (May 25)

In an air battle over Lebanon, Israeli air force planes down six Syrian MIG 21's. (June 27)

Newly appointed U.S. special envoy for the autonomy talks, Robert Strauss, meets with Prime Minister Begin in Jerusalem and President Sadat in Alexandria. (July 2-3)

Prime Minister [Begin](#) and President [Sadat](#) meet for two days of talks in Alexandria. (July 10-12)

The U.S. and the USSR agree to replace UNEF in Sinai by UNTSO. Three days later Israel announces its objections to the plan. (July 19)

The Security Council terminates the mandate of UNEF. Members of this force will be replaced by UNTSO. Israel opposes the plan saying it is not an acceptable alternative multi-national force. Israel's objections are termed by the U.S. as "misconceptions." (July 24)

The [IDF](#) destroys three terrorist bases in southern Lebanon. (August 3)

Israel air force planes, on a reconnaissance flight over Lebanon, clash with and down four Syrian MIG 21's. (September 24)

Ambassador Sol Linowitz succeeds Robert Strauss as the U.S. special envoy for the autonomous talks. (November 7)

Mt. Sinai and the Saint Catharine region are returned to Egypt two months ahead of schedule. (November 15)

Israel returns the Alma oil field in A-Tour to Egypt. (November 25)

Following a meeting between President Carter and Defense Minister [Weizman](#), the U.S. announces the addition of \$200 million to the \$2.2 billion loan included in the special [aid](#) to Israel in the wake of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty (December 31)

[Saddam Hussein](#) becomes [Iraq's](#) head of state.



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### 1980

[Egypt](#) appoints Saad Mortada as its first ambassador to [Israel](#). Dr. Eliyahu Ben Elissar will be Israel's first ambassador to Egypt. (January 5)

The Israeli cabinet affirms the right of Israeli Jews to settle in [Hebron](#). (February 10)

Embassy of Israel opens in Cairo. (February 18)

The first Egyptian diplomats arrive in Israel to open the Egyptian embassy in [Tel Aviv](#). (February 21)

The pound is replaced by the shekel. (February 24)

The Security Council adopts a resolution calling on Israel to dismantle existing settlements and discontinue establishing new settlements. The U. S. votes in favor. Later President Carter disavowed the vote saying it was the result of communication failure. (March 1)

Israel inaugurates commercial air links with Egypt. Israeli and Egyptian officials initial in Cairo a five year cooperation agreement in the spheres of culture, education and science. (March 3)

An Israel-Egypt agreement on tourism is signed in Cairo (March 11)

An Israel-Egypt civil aviation agreement is initiliated in [Tel Aviv](#). (March 14)

A contract for the sale of Egyptian oil to Israel is signed in Cairo (March 18)

An Israel-Egypt transportation agreement is signed in [Tel Aviv](#) regulating sea and land movement of people and goods. (March 30)

The U.S. [vetoes](#) a Security Council draft resolution calling for the creation of a Palestinian state. (April 30)

Terrorists in [Hebron](#) kill seven Jewish students and wound 16 others. The mayors of Hebron and Halhoul are deported to Lebanon for incitement. (May 2)

The Security Council votes for a resolution calling on Israel to rescind the deportation of the mayors of Hebron and Halhoul. The U.S. abstains (May 8)

In an interview in the *Washington Post* Prince Fahd of [Saudi Arabia](#) says that if Israel would declare its intention to withdraw from areas occupied in 1967, "Saudi Arabia would do its utmost to bring the Arabs to cooperate and work for a full settlement." [Begin](#) invites Fahd to come to Jerusalem and address the Knesset. (May 25)

Two [West Bank](#) mayors are injured in bombings by members of the Jewish underground. (June 2)

Basic Law: ["Jerusalem, Capital of Israel"](#) is passed. (July 30)

The [Security Council votes](#) to condemn Israel for the passage of the Jerusalem law and urged all nations not to recognize it. The U.S. abstains. (August 20)

A conference of Islamic foreign ministers is held in Fez. They agree on a plan to force Israel out of the [UN](#) and to lead a holy war against Israel. (September 20)

Israel and the U.S. sign an agreement guaranteeing the supply of oil to Israel in times of specified emergencies. (October 17)

Israeli planes strike at terrorist bases in southern [Lebanon](#). Two Syrian planes are shot down. (December 31)

## 1981

Six Israelis are wounded by Katyusha rockets fired at [Kiryat Shmona](#) from [Lebanon](#). (January 28)

Israeli jets attack terrorist targets near Tyre following katyusha attack on [Kiryat Shmona](#) (March 2)

[Maccabi Tel-Aviv](#) basketball team wins European Champions' Cup. (March 27)

Israeli jets down two Syrian helicopters near Zahla in Lebanon. Prime Minister Begin explained the action as an effort to prevent Syrian domination of Lebanon (April 28).

Syria introduces S.A. 6 ground to air missiles into the Bekka Valley in Lebanon. Israeli planes attack targets in south Lebanon (April 29).

[Israel Air Force](#) destroys [Iraqi nuclear reactor](#) just before it is to become operative. (June 7)

The U.S. suspends arms deliveries to Israel in the wake of the Baghdad raid (June 10)

The Security Council condemns Israel for the raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor. (June 20)

Israel elects the tenth Knesset. Likud wins 48 seats, Labor 47. PM Begin starts talks for the formation of the new government. (June 30)

In heavy shelling of northern Galilee, 3 Israelis are killed in Nahariyah and 17 wounded in Kiryat Shmona. (July 15)

Israel accepts a cease fire proposal brought by Ambassador Habib. In ten days of shelling six Israelis were killed, 65 wounded. Heavy damage caused to homes, factories and public buildings (July 24).

Egyptian President [Anwar Sadat](#) is assassinated. [Hosni Mubarak](#) succeeds him. (October 6)

[Elections](#) of [Tenth Knesset](#). (June 30)

Prime Minister [Begin](#), accompanied by Ministers [Shamir](#), [Sharon](#), and Burg visit Washington for talks with President Reagan and his senior advisors on U.S. arms sale to Saudi Arabia and U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation agreement (September 6-16).

President Sadat is assassinated in Cairo. Israeli leaders eulogize the late president. (October 6)

Israel and Egypt conclude three days of discussions on the normalization process, led by Defense Minister Sharon and Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali. Series of agreements are signed. (October 27)

Israeli condemns a U.S. Senate vote to approve sale of AWACS to [Saudi Arabia](#). (October 29)

In a speech to the Knesset, Prime Minister Begin rejects [Prince Fahd 8 Point Peace Plan](#). (November 2)

[Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) signed with U.S. for military and civilian cooperation. (November 30)

The United States sells AWACS radar planes to [Saudi Arabia](#) after a

divisive battle with the [pro-Israel lobby](#).

[Golan Heights Law](#) passed. (December 14)

The U.S. suspends the implementation of the strategic cooperation agreement. The Security Council calls on Israel to rescind forthwith the Golan Heights Law. (December 18)

## 1982

The U.N. [General Assembly condemns](#) Israel for the passage of the [Golan Heights Law](#). (February 2)

The [Knesset](#) expressed its regret over U.S. sale of F-16 and Hawk missiles to [Jordan](#) (February 15).

Israel proceeds to dismantle and remove its civilian settlements in northern Sinai (March)

An Israeli diplomat is assassinated by terrorists in Paris (April 3)

Students and a few families are the last holdouts in Yamit. About 200 soldiers clash with 200 protesters barricaded on roofs. (Mid-April 1982)

Israel downs two Syrian MIGs over Lebanon, bombs terrorist bases in Sidon (April 21)

Demolition of Yamit completed (April 23)

Israel's three-stage [withdrawal from Sinai](#) completed. President Reagan congratulates President Mubarak and Prime Minister Begin on the new phase of Israel-Egypt ties. (April 25)

Israeli jets bomb terrorist targets in southern Lebanon for the first time since July 24, 1981. Northern and Western Galilee are shelled by PLO artillery. (May 9)

The Israeli embassy in Kinshasa, Zaire, is re-opened after diplomatic ties resumed (May 16)



Israel's ambassador to London, [Shlomo Argov](#), is wounded in a [Palestinian terrorist attack](#). (June 3)

Israeli airplanes raid terrorist targets in Beirut and southern [Lebanon](#). The [PLO](#) retaliates by massive artillery bombardment of the entire northern border causing heavy damage. (June 4)

[Operation Peace for Galilee](#) (June 1982) removes [Palestine Liberation Organization \(PLO\)](#) terrorists from Lebanon. (June 6)

[IDF](#) units cross the Lebanese border and advance along the coastal road to Tyre, reach Nabatiya in central [Lebanon](#) and move into Fatahland in the east. (June 6)

The [IDF](#) continues its advance, captures the Beaufort Castle and clashes with the Syrian army. The navy lands tanks and infantry north of Sidon. (June 7)

Sidon falls to the [IDF](#) whose advance units reach Damur, while other units advance towards the Beirut-Damascus road. The [Knesset](#) rejects (by 94 votes) a no-confidence motion. 6 Syrian MIGs are downed. (June 8)

[U.S. vetoes](#) a [Security Council](#) draft resolution condemning the Israeli operation. 19 Syrian ground to air missile batteries are destroyed by the [Israel Air Force](#) in the Bekaa Valley. 22 Syrian planes are downed. [IDF](#) reaches Lake Karoun in the Bekaa Valley and the vicinity of Beirut's international airport. (June 9)

[President Reagan](#) demands an immediate cease fire. The government, in an emergency session, accepts his call. [IDF](#) reaches the Beirut Damascus road. (June 10)

Israel proposes an arrangement for southern [Lebanon](#) to include the stationing of a multinational force. (June 13)

Prime Minister [Begin](#) holds talks with [President Reagan](#) in the White House. (June 21)

In an emergency session, the [UN General Assembly](#) adopts a resolution calling for an end to hostilities and immediate unconditional withdrawal

of Israel from Lebanon (127 to 2). (June 26)

The [IDF](#) begins to besiege West Beirut, cutting off power and water. Israel allows Ambassador Habib additional time to continue his efforts to bring about the PLO withdrawal. (July 4)

[President Reagan](#) orders the hold up of cluster bombs for Israel (July 19).

The [Israel Air Force](#) destroys three ground-to-air Syrian SAM batteries in the Bekaa Valley. Israel jets continue to bombard terrorist targets in West Beirut. (July 25)

The [Security Council](#) adopts a resolution calling on Israel to lift the siege from Beirut. The U.S. is absent from the vote. Israel expresses the hope for a peaceful solution for the [PLO](#) evacuation from Beirut. (July 30)

In a meeting with Foreign Minister [Shamir](#), [President Reagan](#) demands that Israel cease all hostilities in Beirut. Israel agrees to allow Ambassador Habib additional time for his diplomatic efforts. (August 2).

[IDF](#) intensifies the siege of West Beirut, occupying additional positions overlooking that area. 18 Israeli soldiers die in these battles. President Reagan demands of Mr. Begin an immediate halt to the shelling of Beirut threatening to review U.S.-Israel relations. (August 4)

Israeli jets carry out massive air raids on Beirut. [President Reagan](#) phones Prime Minister [Begin](#) demanding an end to the bombing. PM Begin agrees to halt the raids. (August 12).

The Government approves the agreement. The PLO withdrawal to begin on 21 August and be completed by 1 September. At an emergency session of the UN General Assembly, a resolution is adopted (by 107 in favor, 5 against and 27 abstentions) calling in fact for the creation of a Palestinian state. Israel announces its objection to any change in Resolution 242. (August 19)

Bashir Gemayel is elected President of Lebanon. His inaugural date is set for 23 September. (23 August).

Prime Minister [Begin](#) holds talks with Bashir Gemayel in [Nahariya](#). Gemayel rejects his call for the signing of an Israel-Lebanon peace treaty.

The PLO withdrawal from Beirut is completed. (September 1).

President Reagan offers a [Middle East Peace Plan](#). (September 1)

The Cabinet rejects the Reagan Plan, claiming it contradicts and negates the Camp David agreements. PM Begin meets with Defense Secretary Weinberger in Jerusalem. (September 2)

8 Israeli soldiers are kidnapped in Lebanon. (September 4)

Israeli jets attack Syrian and PLO targets in the Beka'a Valley. (September 13)

President elect Bashir Gemayel is murdered in the Phallange headquarters in Beirut. The IDF is ordered to take control of key positions in West Beirut. (September 14)

Hundreds of thousands protest the [War in Lebanon](#).

[IDF](#) forces enter western Beirut. (September 15)

Lebanese Phalangist militiamen murder Palestinian refugees at [Sabra and Shatilla](#). (September 16)

Amin Gemayel is elected president of Lebanon. (September 21).

[IDF](#) withdraws from Beirut. Prime Minister Begin appoints Supreme Court President Yitzchak Kahan to examine Israel's role in the [massacre at Sabra and Shatilla](#). (September 28)

Israel completes its withdrawal from West Beirut. (September 29)

Israeli jets destroy Syrian SAM 9 missiles in Lebanon. (October 4)

The Cabinet announces its position regarding withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon; peace treaty with Lebanon; exchange of prisoners and appropriate security arrangements for Israel. (October 10).

An Iranian attempt to disqualify Israel from attending the General Assembly fails. (October 26)

The Israeli military government building in Tyre collapses due to gas leakage, 75 Israeli soldiers and 14 local Arabs die, 27 Israelis and 28 Arabs are wounded. (November 11)

Foreign Minister [Shamir](#) visits Zaire and signs a series of bilateral agreements. (November 28)

The UN [General Assembly](#) adopts a resolution calling on the Security Council to take action to implement the plan for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. It demands Israeli withdrawal from territories seized in 1967, including East Jerusalem. Israel rejects the resolution. (December 10).

## 1983

Faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary votes to [open the rabbinical school to women](#), allowing them to become [Conservative rabbis](#). Most of the senior [Talmudists](#) leave JTS shortly after.

[Kahan Commission](#) releases report on [Sabra and Shatilla massacres](#) leading to resignation of [Ariel Sharon](#), Defense Minister. (February 8)

[Ariel Sharon](#) resigns as Defense Minister in the wake of the publications of the Kahan Commission report (February 9).

Emil Grunzweig, a participant in a Peace Now demonstration in Jerusalem, is murdered by a hand grenade thrown at the demonstrators (February 11).

Defense Minister Sharon resigns from his office but remains in the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio. He is replaced by Ambassador Arens. (February 13)

Chaim Herzog is elected by the Knesset as Israel's sixth president. (March 22).

The Knesset approves the agreement with Lebanon (May 16).

U.S. negotiated withdrawal agreement signed between [Israel](#) and [Lebanon](#). (May 17)

[Reform](#) rabbinate decides that children of mixed marriages whose [fathers are Jewish](#), are Jewish if so educated.

*New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman and *Washington Post* columnist Loren Jenkins win Pulitzer Prizes for their coverage of the [Lebanon War](#).

Three Israeli soldiers are killed near Tyre bringing the number of casualties since June 1982 to 500. (June 10)

[Syria](#) declares [PLO](#) chairman [Yasser Arafat](#) "persona non grata" and orders him to leave the country. Arafat flies to Tunis and calls Syria's action "regrettable" (June 24).

Liberia announces resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel at an ambassadorial level. (August 12)

[Prime Minister Begin](#) informs the Cabinet of his intention to resign from office. (August 28)

[Prime Minister Begin](#) resign and [Yitzhak Shamir](#) heads new government. (September 2)

[IDF](#) forces in Lebanon complete the withdrawal to the Awali River. (September 3)

[Shamir](#) presents his government to the Knesset and wins a vote of confidence. He retains the Foreign Ministry. (October 10)

Terrorist attack on U.S. marine headquarters in Beirut kills 241 Americans. (October 23)

In a terrorist attack on IDF camp in Tyre, 28 Israeli personnel and 32 local inhabitants are killed. (November 4)

In an exchange of prisoners, Israel receives six IDF soldiers in return for 4600 terrorists held in Lebanon and Israel. (November 24).

Prime Minister [Shamir](#) and Defense Minister [Arens](#) hold talks in the White House and reach an agreement on joint Israel-U.S. strategic,

political, military and economic cooperation. (November 28).

[Israeli Navy](#) shells terrorist bases north of Tripoli (December 10)

4000 [PLO](#) terrorists are evacuated from Tripoli under [UN](#) auspices.  
(December 20)

## 1984

[Reconstructionist](#) Rabbinical College votes to admit gays and lesbians as rabbinical students.

Reagan orders U.S. marines to leave Beirut and redeploy off-shore, ending the American role in the peacekeeping force.

The Government of Lebanon abrogates unilaterally the May 17, 1983 Israel-Lebanon agreement. (March 5)

52 civilians are wounded in a terrorist attack in the heart of Jerusalem. One terrorist is killed and two others captured. (April 2)

El Salvador returns its embassy to Jerusalem. (April 12)

Three members of the Israel liaison unit to Lebanon are kidnapped by Syrian soldiers south of Tripoli. (May 1)

Israel and the U.S. hold joint military exercises. (June 20)

Elections to the [Eleventh Knesset](#). (July 23)

National unity government ([Likud](#) and [Labor](#)) formed after elections. It is headed by [Shimon Peres](#) with [Yitzchak Shamir](#) as Vice Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs. (September 13)

A car bomb kills 23 people in the U.S. people in the U.S. embassy in Beirut. The U.S. Senate approves the Trade Bill including an agreement to constitute Free Trade Zone with Israel. (September 20)

Prime Minister Peres hold talks in Washington with President Reagan and senior officials, Congressional leaders and UN Security General De



Cuauillar as well as leaders of the Jewish community. (October 7-14)

[Operation Moses](#), immigration of [Jews from Ethiopia](#). (November 1984 - January 1985)

U.S. and Israeli naval units hold joint maneuvers in the eastern Mediterranean. (December 11)

The UN [General Assembly](#) adopts a resolution stating, inter alia, that Israel is not a peace loving nation. (December 14)

[Terrorists](#) take over a bus on the [Tel Aviv-Ashkelon](#) route, starting "Bus 300" affair in [Shin Bet](#).

Reverend Jessie Jackson is castigated for calling Jews - "Hymies" and New York - "Hymietown."

## 1985

[Free Trade Agreement](#) signed with United States.

Jewish Theological Seminary ordains Amy Eilberg — first woman rabbi ordained by the [Conservative](#) movement.

President Ronald Reagan visits Bitburg cemetery in West Germany, site of Nazi [S.S.](#) graves.

[Operation Moses](#) clandestine airlift to [Ethiopian Jews](#) to Israel ends.

Notorious [Auschwitz](#) doctor, Josef Mengele, is confirmed dead.

[Operation Moses](#), in which 7,500 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel ends prematurely due to disclosures. (January 3)

Israel jets bomb terrorist bases in the Bekaa Valley. (January 9)

The government resolves to redeploy [the](#) IDF in Lebanon in three stages. Stage one within five weeks will see the IDF withdrawing from Sidon and being redeployed in the Nabatiyeh-Litani sector; stage two will involve withdrawal in the eastern sector and in the final phase the IDF will be

redeployed along the international border. There will be a buffer zone where local Lebanese forces, assisted by the IDF, will operate. (January 14)

The IDF commences stage I of the withdrawal. (January 20).

Egyptian and Israeli teams start talks in Beer Sheba on Taba. At their conclusion they agree to meet again to resolve the issue. (January 27).

The IDF completes the first stage of its withdrawal and redeployment. It is replaced in Sidon by units of the Lebanese army. (February 16)

10 soldiers are killed and 14 wounded in a car bomb explosion outside Metulla. (March 10)

The U.S. vetoes a Lebanese draft resolution condemning the Israeli Iron Fist policy in Lebanon. (March 12).

The U.S. invites Israel to participate in research for the SDI (also known as Star Wars). (April 5)

The IDF completes stage 2 of its redeployment in Lebanon when it leaves the Nabatiyeh area. (April 13)

The [Israeli navy](#) sinks a terrorist ship some 200 kms. at sea. 20 drown and 8 are captured. (April 20)

The IDF completes its withdrawal from the Bekaa Valley, Jebel Barukh and Jezzin. (April 24)

The U.S. authorizes 1.5 billion dollar emergency aide to Israel. (May 1)

More than 1,150 terrorists imprisoned in Israel are exchanged for three Israeli POWs (May 20).

Israel releases 31 Lebanese detainees in an effort to help the U.S. obtain the release of passengers hijacked aboard a TWA airliner in Beirut. (June 24)

The Cabinet proclaims an emergency economic program to curb inflation. The budget is reduced, prices rise, an 18.8% devaluation of the Shekel and

additional taxes are levied. (July 1)

In first ruling by Israeli court convicting Israeli Jews of [terrorist](#) involvement, three Jewish [settlers](#) are convicted of murder and twelve other defendants are found guilty of committing violent crimes between 1980-84 against [West Bank](#) mayors (July 10).

Three Israeli delegations proceed to China to sign cooperation agreements in agriculture, hotel development and textile. (July 17)

The Israel-U.S. Free Trade Zone Agreement is ratified. (August 24)

Israeli airforce jets bomb PLO and Force 17 headquarters in Tunisia following continuous attacks on Israelis abroad and in Lebanon. (October 1)

The U.S. abstains during a Security Council vote condemning Israel for the attack on the PLO headquarters in Tunis. (October 3)

Egyptian soldier kills seven Israeli civilians touring in the Ras Bourka area in Sinai. (October 5)

Palestinian terrorists hijack Italian cruise ship, the [Achille Lauro](#), and murder American Leon Klinghoffer (Oct.8).

The [IDF](#) and the U.S. army hold joint exercises. (November 6)

2 Syrian MIGs are downed by Israeli jets over Lebanon as Israel clarifies that it has no interest in escalating the tension with Syria. (November 19)

[Jonathan Pollard](#) is arrested in Washington and charged with [spying for Israel](#). (November 21)

[Terrorists](#) attack El-Al counters in the Rome and Vienna airports killing 15 innocent bystanders. (December 28)

Administrative attache at Israeli embassy in Cairo is killed.

[Eilat](#) becomes free trade zone.

## 1986

JTS's new Chancellor, [Ismar Schorsch](#), opens cantorial school to women on same basis as women were previously admitted to rabbinical school.

The New Shekel replaces the Shekel as Israel's currency. (January 1)

Washington reports that [Syria](#) had withdrawn SA 6 and SA 8 missiles from Lebanese territory. (January 3)

The Inner Cabinet decides that Israel will agree to the resolution of the Taba dispute through international arbitration in return for the fulfillment by Egypt of the normalization agreement and the return of the Egyptian ambassador to Israel. (January 13)

Israel and [Syria](#) sign in the Hague an agreement to establish diplomatic relations. (January 17)

The Israeli airforce intercepts a Libyan executive jet en route to Damascus after hearing that terrorist leaders might be on board. The plane was released. The U.S. [vetoes](#) a Syrian resolution in the [Security Council](#) condemning Israel. (February 4)

[Anatoly Sharansky](#), Soviet Jewish dissident, is freed from prison and arrives in Israel. (February 11)

The Ivory Coast and Israel announce the restoration of diplomatic relations (February 12)

2 IDF soldiers and an SLA soldier are kidnapped in southern Lebanon by Shi'ite terrorists. Efforts to retrieve the kidnapped fail after extensive military operations on land and at sea. (February 17)

[King Hussein](#) announces end of year long effort to construct joint strategy with the PLO. (February 19)

Marshall Plan for Middle East Peace discussed. (April)

Defense Minister [Rabin](#) and Defense Secretary Weinberger sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Israel's participation in the Strategic Defense Initiative. (May 3)

[Elie Wiesel](#) wins [Nobel Peace Prize](#).

Alleged Nazi criminal [John Demjanjuk](#) is deported from U.S. for trial in Israel as [Treblinka's](#) "Ivan the Terrible."

In their first official diplomatic contact in nineteen years, [Soviet](#) and Israeli representatives meet in Helsinki, [Finland](#) to discuss resumption of consular relations. (August 18)

Prime Minister [Peres](#) visits Cameroon. At the conclusion of the visit, both countries announce the restoration of diplomatic relations. (August 24-26)

Terrorist attacks against synagogue in Istanbul by Abu Nidal organization on the Neveh Shalom synagogue killing 22 people. (September 6)

[Ron Arad](#), [Israeli Air Force navigator](#), is captured in Lebanon. (October 16)

The rotation agreement is implemented when [Shamir](#) becomes Prime Minister and [Peres](#) becomes Vice Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs. (October 20)

[Yitzchak Shamir](#) presents his government to the [Knesset](#). (October 29)

First liver transplant in Israel takes place.

Kurt Waldheim is elected president of [Austria](#).

Mordechai Vanunu, a former technician at the Dimona Nuclear plant, is kidnapped by agents and brought to Israel to stand trial for supplying photos and information to the *Sunday Times* in London.

## 1987

The first batch of F-16 jet fighters arrive in Israel. (February 9)

Israel wins a status of a U.S. ally who is not a member of NATO (February 14)

Prime Minister [Shamir](#) leaves for talks in Washington with President Reagan and senior members of his administration. (February 16)

[Demjanjuk](#) trial begins. (February 16)

Jonathan Jay [Pollard](#), American spy for Israel, is sentenced to life imprisonment after pleading guilty. His wife Anne was sentenced to 5 years in jail. (March 4)

The Inner Cabinet denounces the Apartheid policy of South Africa and limits Israel's security ties with Pretoria. (March 18)

Landau Commission investigates GSS interrogation methods. (June 4)

"Night of the Hang Gliders." Palestinian terrorist flies over border from [Lebanon](#) and attacks an [IDF](#) base. Six IDF soldiers killed. (June 4)

Togo and Israel resume diplomatic relations. (June 9)

A Soviet Consular mission arrives in Israel, the first since 1967. (July 12)

The Cabinet decides to halt production of the Lavi. (August 30)

Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, former officer of the Third Reich, is barred from the United States.

German-Israel Foundation for Scientific Research and Development is established.

Landau Commission presents report. (November 1)

Prime Minister General Zeine el Abideen Ben Ali of [Tunisia](#) removes President Bourguiba from office saying the Tunisian leader had become senile. Ben Ali becomes president. (November 7)

Six Israeli soldiers are killed in a camp near Kiryat Shmona by a terrorist who reached Israel on a glider. (November 25)

First heart transplant performed in Israel.



Two hundred thousand people attend rally in Washington, DC in support of immigration of [Soviet Jewry](#).

Widespread violence ([the intifada](#)) starts in Israeli-administered areas. (December 9)

Defense Minister [Rabin](#) and Secretary of Defense Carlucci sign in Washington a Memorandum of Understanding valid for ten years.

## 1988

Five residents of the territories are expelled, accused of hostile activities and incitement. (January 3)

The [Security Council](#) adopts a resolution calling on Israel to refrain from expelling Palestinians from the areas. (January 6)

The U.S. [vetoes](#) a [Security Council](#) draft resolution condemning Israel for bombing raids in Lebanon. (January 18)

Prime Minister [Shamir](#) expresses reservations over Secretary of State Shultz's plan which includes an interim arrangement for the inhabitants of the territories, an international opening session, bilateral talks on permanent settlement. Shultz called for the implementation of his plan in the course of 1988. (January 30)

Three terrorists infiltrate from [Egypt](#), commandeer a bus near Dimona killing three Israeli civilians before being shot dead. (March 7)

Prime Minister [Shamir](#) meets in Washington with President Reagan, Secretary Shultz, and other leading members of the administration as well as Congressional leaders. (March 14-16)

[Khalil al-Wazir \(Abu Jihad\)](#), Palestinian leader assassinated at his home in Tunis. (April 16)

Israel and the United States sign a Memorandum of Understanding dealing with military, political, economic and scientific cooperation. (April 21)

White House issued a statement announcing a joint Israel-U.S. development of the Arrow anti-missile missile and reaffirming U.S. commitment to Israel's security. (June 27-28)

Israel and U.S. cooperate on the production of the [Arrow](#) missiles. (June 29)

The Israeli Consular Mission in Moscow begins to function. (July 26)

[King Hussein](#) announces the severance of legal and administrative ties between Jordan and the West Bank. (July 31)

Twenty-five wounded in a grenade attack at the Haifa mall. (August)

Israel expels eight leaders of the uprising to [Lebanon](#) (August 1)

The covenant of the [Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas](#), circulated in the West Bank. (September 5)

Israel launches into space the Ofeq 1 experimental satellite. (September 19)

China agrees to the opening of an Israeli Scientific Exchange office in Beijing. (October 11)

Israel elects the [12th Knesset](#). [Likud](#) wins 40 seats, [Labor](#) 39. The Religious parties obtain 18 seats. (November 1)

In Algiers, the Palestinian National Council proclaim the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. (November 15)

An IDF rescue team leaves for Armenia to help rescue survivors following a devastating earthquake there. (December 10)

[Likud](#) government in power following elections. National Unity government formed (December)

President Ronald Reagan says at a White House press conference that the US has decided to [open a dialogue with the PLO](#). (December 14)

The Second National Unity Government is presented to the [Knesset](#) headed by [Yitzhak Shamir](#). [Yitzhak Rabin](#) remains defense minister, [Moshe Arens](#) is appointed foreign minister, and [Shimon Peres](#) vice premier and finance minister. (December 22)

## 1989

Fifteen intifada "activists" are expelled to [Lebanon](#). (January 1)

Israel and Egypt complete the marking of the border near Taba. (January 4)

Six-point peace initiative proposed by Israel. (January 9)

The [UN](#) Security Council grants the [PLO](#) the right to speak directly to the Council as "Palestine," on the same level as any UN member nation. (January 12)

Taba is returned to Egypt via international negotiations. (February 15)

Central African Republic announces restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel. (January 16)

The [Knesset](#) unanimously adopts a resolution calling on President Bush to pardon [Jonathan Pollard](#). (January 17)

Prime Minister [Shamir proposes a two-stage peace plan](#). (February 1)

Israel's minister for religious affairs visits [Hungary](#), being the first Israeli minister on an official visit to that country. (February 17)

Taba is restored to Egyptian sovereignty. (March 15)

The government [issues a peace initiative](#) based on four points. (May 14)

Eight [intifada](#) leaders are deported to Lebanon (June 29)

The [Security Council condemns](#) Israel for the deportation of eight Palestinians. (July 6)

An Arab terrorist commandeers a bus on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. The bus crashes into a ravine. 14 passengers are killed and 30 wounded. (July 6)

[IDF](#) commandos kidnap Sheikh Obeid, [Hezbollah](#)'s spiritual leader, from his village in southern [Lebanon](#). (July 29)

The Soviet government permits the opening of a Jewish school in Riga, the first in fifty years. (September 1)

[Egypt](#) transmits to Israel a [ten-point plan](#) for elections in the areas. (September 15)

Israel and [Hungary](#) restore full diplomatic relations. (September 18)

More than sixty US Senators sign a letter to Secretary of State James Baker opposing the grant of an entry visa for Palestinian leader [Yasser Arafat](#) to address the UN General Assembly. (September 22)

[Egypt](#) and Israel sign a memorandum for the development of industrial and commercial ties. (October 4)

Syrian pilot defects to Israel, landing a MIG-23 at [Megiddo](#).

Israeli Cabinet and [Knesset](#) approve free and democratic elections in the [West Bank](#) and [Gaza](#).

[Five point plan](#) for peace proposed by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker. (October 6)

Israel and Ethiopia restore full diplomatic relations. (November 3)

The Prime Minister meets in Washington with President Bush and Secretary of State Baker (November 15)

Start of mass [immigration of Jews from former Soviet Union](#)

The Berlin Wall comes down.

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### 1990

*Life* magazine's list of the 100 most important Americans of the 20th century included 15 Jews: [Irving Berlin](#), [Leonard Bernstein](#), Bob Dylan, [Albert Einstein](#), Abraham Flexner, Betty Friedan, [Milton Friedman](#), Edwin Land, William Levitt, Louis B. Mayer, [J. Robert Oppenheimer](#), William Paley, [Jonas Salk](#), [Alfred Stieglitz](#), and Walter Winchell.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), the rabbinical schools of the [Reform](#) movement, removes obstacles to ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis.

[Persian Gulf War](#) to maintain stability: 1990-1991



Israel and the U.S. sign a cooperation agreement on medicine. (January 8)

Foreign Minister Arens visits Portugal, the first such visit of an Israeli minister. (January 17)

Nine Israelis are killed and 16 wounded in an attack on a tourist bus in Egypt. (February 4)

Foreign Minister Arens signs a protocol in Prague renewing diplomatic relations between Israel and Czechoslovakia. (February 9)

[Czechoslovakia](#) restores diplomatic relations with Israel. (February 9)

[Poland](#) restores diplomatic relations with Israel. (February 27)

Break-up of the national unity government following a vote of no-confidence in the [Knesset](#). The peace process is effectively in abeyance. (March 15)

U.S. Senate adopts a resolution recognizing [Jerusalem](#) as Israel's capital. (March 24)

Israel and Bulgaria sign a protocol to restore diplomatic relations. (April 3)

The U.S. House of Representatives adopts a [resolution](#) recognizing [Jerusalem](#) as the capital of Israel. (April 24)

Israel and Bulgaria restore full diplomatic relations. (May 3)

Ami Popper murders seven Arab workers at Vradim Junction. (May 20)

[Greece](#) grants a de jure recognition to Israel and establishes full diplomatic relations with Israel. (May 21)

Two motorboats manned by [PLO](#) terrorists land in central Israel. [IDF](#) repulses the attackers. The Palestine Liberation Front assumes responsibility for the raid. (May 30)

The U.S. vetoes a draft resolution in the Security Council to send an observer to the territories. (May 31)

[Yitzhak Shamir](#) presents his government to the Knesset. David Levy appointed foreign minister and Moshe Arens defense minister. (June 8)

The U.S. suspends its dialogue with the PLO for its failure to condemn the May 30 attacks on Israel. (June 20)

[Iraq](#) invades [Kuwait](#) (August 2)

The Security Council imposes economic sanctions on [Iraq](#). (August 6)

The U.S. begins to send troops to the Persian Gulf. (August 7)

[Iraq](#) annexes [Kuwait](#). (August 8)

[Saddam Hussein](#) says that military action against Iraq will be met with a strike on Israel. (August 9)

Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz says Iraq will use chemical weapons if Israel uses nuclear arms. (August 18)

Foreign Minister Levy visits Washington, meets with Secretary Baker. It is agreed that there be no linkage between the resolution of the Gulf crisis and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Agreement is reached on granting of U.S. loan guarantees of 400 million dollars. (September 3)

[Saudi Arabia](#) and USSR sign agreement in Moscow restoring diplomatic relations after 52-year hiatus. (September 17)

Disturbances on the [Temple Mount](#) in [Jerusalem](#) kill 21 Arabs. (October 8)

[Saddam Hussein](#) threatens Israel with new missiles "when the time comes." (October 9)

The Security Council [adopts a resolution](#) condemning Israel and sending a fact-finding mission to [Jerusalem](#). (October 12)

The Security Council unanimously deplores Israel's refusal to permit a fact-finding mission. (October 24)

[Rabbi Meir Kahane](#), founder of Jewish Defense League and [Kach](#) Party, assassinated in New York City. (November 5)

The Security Council authorizes use of all necessary means against [Iraq](#) unless it withdraws by January 15, 1991. (November 29)

Following a meeting with President Bush in the White House, Prime Minister Shamir says that he was promised that there would be no deals at Israel's expense. (December 11)

The Security Council [approves a resolution](#) condemning Israel's policy of expulsion calling lands occupied by Israel in 1967 including [Jerusalem](#), Palestinian territories. (December 20)

Saddam Hussein tells Spanish Television that Tel Aviv will be Iraq's first target if war breaks out. (December 23)

Prime Minister Shamir threatens retaliation if Israel is attacked. (December 24)

Israeli jets strike PLO bases in Lebanon. (December 31)

The first Israeli satellite, Ofek 2, is launched into space.

Nelson Mandela is freed from prison. A month later he meets with [Yasser Arafat](#), who wishes him success in fighting apartheid.

Police arrest Roni Leibowitz, a motorbike bandit and millionaire's son, who robbed 22 banks.

## 1991

First Patriot surface-to-air missile batteries arrive in Israel. (January 10)

Civil defense authorities instruct Israelis to begin preparing sealed rooms. (January 14)

[PLO](#)'s second-ranking official [Abu Iyad](#) (Salah Khalaf) is assassinated in Tunis.

Beginning of the [Gulf War](#). Israel goes into state of alert as war breaks out. (January 15)

Israel attacked by eight Iraqi Scud missiles during the [Gulf War](#). Two missiles hit Tel Aviv and a third lands near Haifa, causing great damage in residential areas. (January 18)

Four Iraqi Scuds launched at Israel. (January 19)

A Scud missile hits Ramat Gan. 96 are injured, 400 apartments are damaged. (January 22)

A Scud missile is intercepted over Haifa; as it fell it shattered windows in the Haifa area. (January 23)

Eight Scuds are fired at Israel. One person is killed, 45 are injured in Ramat Gan, 144 apartments are heavily damaged, 400 other apartments are lightly damaged. (January 24)

Four Scud missiles are fired at Israel. 3 are intercepted over Haifa and one over Tel Aviv. Slight damage is reported. (January 25)

A Scud missile lands in the [Galilee](#), causing no damage or injuries. (January 28)

A Scud lands in the West Bank causing no injuries or damage. (January 31)

A Scud missile lands in Israel causing no injury or damage. (February 2)

A Scud missile lands in Israel causing no injuries or damage. (February 3)

A Scud lands in the center of Israel. 25 civilians are injured, 400 apartments are damaged. (February 8)

A Scud lands in the center of Israel causing no injury or damage. (February 11)

A Scud missile lands near Tel Aviv injuring 6 residents and damaging dozens of homes. (February 12)

2 Scuds are fired at Israel. One lands in the Negev, the other in the Galilee. Both cause no injuries or damage. (February 19)

US releases \$400 million loan guarantee to Israel for housing for [Soviet Jewish](#) immigrants. (February 20)

A Scud lands in the center of Israel causing a fire to break out, but no injuries or damage are reported. (February 23)

Two Scuds land in the Negev desert causing no injuries or damage. (February 25)

[Gulf War](#) ends. (February 28)

Israel congratulates President Bush as the Gulf War comes to an end. Israel demands the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. (February 28)

[Ehud Barak](#) appointed twelfth [IDF](#) Chief-of-General Staff. (April 1)

Middle East peace conference convened in [Madrid](#).

[Operation Solomon](#), airlift of [Jews from Ethiopia](#). 14,420 Ethiopian Jews are rescued and airlifted to Israel hours before the Mengistu regimes collapse. (May 24-25)

The Congo restores diplomatic relations with Israel. (July 14)

Albania's foreign minister visits Israel. Diplomatic relations are established. (August 19)

Israel recognizes the independence of Latvia, [Lithuania](#), and [Estonia](#). (September 4)

U.S. President George Bush criticizes Israel's friends in the U.S. and asks Israel to delay its request for \$10 billion loan guarantees. (September 13)

Secretary of State Baker visits Israel and together with Soviet Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh delivers a [letter of invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference](#). (October 18)

Soviet Union restores full diplomatic relations with Israel. (October 18)

Israeli embassy in Moscow is rededicated. (October 24)

[Madrid Peace Conference](#). (October 30-31)

Bilateral talks are held in Madrid between Israel and [Syria](#), [Lebanon](#) and a [Palestinian-Jordanian](#) delegation. (October 31)

Israel ratifies UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (November 3)

Albania's last 11 Jews arrive in Israel.

Riots break out in Crown Heights, NY after a seven-year old black boy is killed by a car driven by [Hasidic Jews](#).

Second round of the Middle East bilateral talks begins in Washington. (December 9)

[United Nations rescinds resolution equating Zionism with racism](#). (December 16)

Soviet Ambassador Alexander Bovin presents his credentials to President [Herzog](#). (December 23)

Israel and Zambia restore diplomatic relations. (December 26)

## 1992

[Conservative](#) synagogue arm, United Synagogue of America, changes its name to [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)

Israel decides to expel 12 Palestinians following the murder of an Israeli settler in the Gaza Strip. (January 3)

[Security Council condemns](#) Israel for the expulsion of the Palestinians. (January 10)

Another round of peace talks is held in Washington. (January 18-22)



Israel and the People's [Republic of China](#) establish diplomatic relations. (January 24)

The multilateral Middle East peace talks are held in Moscow. (January 28-29)

Diplomatic relations established with [India](#). (January 29)

[Hezbollah](#)'s chief Abbas Musawi is killed in an Israeli air strike. (February 15)

Kiryat Shemona comes under heavy katyusha fire from Lebanon. (February 16)

Another round of bilateral talks held in Washington ends inconclusively (February 27-March 4)

Islamic Jihad terrorists assassinate an Israeli security officer in Ankara. (March 10)

Five killed and 106 wounded in attack on Israeli embassy in [Buenos Aires](#). (March 17)

[Kneset](#) passes law for [direct election](#) of the prime minister. (March 18)

The U.S. accuses Israel of transferring to China information on the Patriot missile. Israel denies the charges. (March 20)

[Kazakhstan](#) establishes diplomatic relations with Israel. (April 12)

Angola establishes diplomatic relations with Israel. (April 16)

Another round of peace talks is held in Washington (April 26-29)

Another round of peace talks is held in Washington (May 1-8)

Armenia establishes diplomatic relations with Israel. (May 4)

[King Hussein](#) announces he will donate \$8.25 million to restore [Al-Aqsa](#) and the [Dome of the Rock](#) mosque in [Jerusalem](#). (May 10)

Acting PLO security head Atif Basaysu assassinated in Paris. (June 8)

Elections for [Thirteenth Knesset](#). [Labor](#) wins majority for the first time since 1977. [Labor](#) gains 44 seats, [Likud](#) 32, [Meretz](#) 12. (June 23)

New government headed by [Yitzhak Rabin](#) of [Labor party](#). (July 10)

Israel formally requests loan guarantees from the U.S.. (July 20)

[Israel](#) wins first [Olympic medals](#), silver and bronze in Judo. (July 30 and 31)

A Memorandum of Understanding on trade, economic affairs and tourism is signed (August 21-23)

Israel announces the release of 800 Palestinian prisoners. 280 houses sealed since 1987 in teh areas would be unsealed. (August 23)

Round Six of the bilateral peace talks resumes in Washington until September 3 (August 24).

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) cancels 11 deportation orders against PLO activists. (August 24)

Israel presents a detailed autonomy plan, defining the role of the Palestinian Administrative Council controlling civilian matters. (August 25)

Rabin announces that Israel is ready to accept territorial compromise on the Golan Heights in return for peace. (September 10)

Gambia restores diplomatic relations with Israel. (September 13)

The second session of Round Six of the bilateral peace talks is held in Washington. (September 14-24)

Round Two of the Arms Control and Regional Security multilateral talks is held in Moscow (September 15-17)

Round Two of multilateral talks is held in Washington. (September 16-17)

Round Two of the multilateral talks on Environment is held in The Hague (September 26-27)

Nicaragua restores diplomatic relations with Israel. (October 5)

U.S. Congress approves the foreign aid appropriations for fiscal 1993, including the annual \$3-billion military and economic aid package and the \$10-billion loan guarantees (October 5)

Session One of Round Seven of the bilateral talks is held in Washington. (October 21-29)

Israel and Jordan announce that they had almost completed a full agenda on peace treaty, water and land claims, arms control and Palestinian refugees in Jordan (October 28)

Multilateral talks on Economic Development are held in Paris (October 29-30)

Session Second of Round Seven of the bilateral peace talks is held in Washington (November 9-19)

Multilateral talks on refugees are held in Ottawa. Syria and Lebanon boycott the talks. (November 11-12)

Round Eight of the bilateral peace talks is held in Washington. (December 7-17).

An Israeli Border Policeman is kidnapped and killed by Hamas terrorists. (December 13)

The cabinet approves deportation of 415 Hamas activists. (December 16)

Israel expels 415 [Hamas](#) activists, 251 from the [West Bank](#), and 164 from [Gaza](#) to [Lebanon](#). The US State Department "strongly condemns the action of deportation." (December 17)

The Arab delegations suspend the bilateral talks in Washington in protest over the Hamas deportations. (December 17)

The Security Council adopts [Resolution 799](#) which condemned Israel's actions. (December 18)

New [Supreme Court](#) building is opened.

## 1993

Israel ratifies an international convention banning chemical weapons. (January 13)

The Knesset repeals a 1986 law banning meetings between Israelis and members of terrorist organizations, opening the way for talks with the PLO. (January 19)

In a unanimous decision, the Israeli High Court of Justice rules that the Hamas deportations were legal. (January 28)

[Jordan](#) appoints Sheikh Sulayman al Jabari Mufti of [Jerusalem](#). (February 16)

Arrow missiles is successfully test-fired. (February 28)

[Ezer Weizman](#) is sworn in as President, succeeding [Chaim Herzog](#). (March 13)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) visits Washington for talks with President Clinton and other political and religious leaders. (March 16)

Israel's Inner Cabinet decides to seal off the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria for an indefinite period. Some 100,000 Palestinians are prevented from working in Israel. (March 30)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) and President [Mubarak](#) hold talks in Ismailiyah. (April 14)

The suspended Eighth Round of bilateral peace talks is resumed in Washington, ends on May 13. (April 27)

Israel to allow the return of 30 deportees, expelled between 1967-1987 for PLO membership. (April 28)

The Eighth Round of talks in Washington ends in deadlock when Israeli and Palestinian negotiators fail to reach an agreement on Statement of Principles. (May 13)

Some 200 [Libyans](#) arrive in [Jerusalem](#) for three day visit to holy sites. Pilgrims call on Muslims to "topple [Zionist](#) entity" and establish [Jerusalem](#) as the capital of a Palestinian state. (May 30-June 1)

Bilateral peace talks are resumed in Washington. This round lasts until July 1. (June 15)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) starts an official visit to France. That country announces an end of arms sales embargo on Israel. (June 30)

Visit to Israel of the deputy foreign minister of Vietnam. During his visit Israel and Vietnam sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of diplomatic relations. (July 11-14)

Israel launches "Operation Accountability" with aerial strikes at [Hizbollah](#) and [PFLP](#) bases. Two Israeli civilians are killed in [Hizballah](#) shelling of Kiryat Shmonah. (July 25)

[The Supreme Court](#) overturns the conviction of John Demjanjuk. (July 29)

"Operation Accountability" ends with an understanding arranged by Secretary of State Christopher, [Syria](#), and [Lebanon](#) to ensure that Hizballah will not shell Israel. (July 31)

Israel-PLO agreement is signed (in secrecy) in [Oslo](#). (August 20)

Announcement is made of an Israeli-PLO agreement. (August 30)

Israel and the PLO exchange [letters](#) formally recognizing each other. (September 10)

The U.S. resumes ties with the [PLO](#) suspended in 1990. (September 11)

[Declaration of Principles](#) on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for the Palestinians signed by Israel and [PLO](#), as representative of the Palestinian people. A historic handshake is made between Prime Minister

[Rabin](#) and PLO leader [Yasser Arafat](#). (September 13)

Israel and Jordan sign a formal "Common Agenda" for negotiations in Washington. (September 14)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) holds talks with President Mubarak in Cairo (September 19)

UEFA (the European football Union) grants [Israel](#) provisional membership. (September 19)

Ashkenazi [Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau](#) meets in Rome with Pope John Paul II. (September 21)

Knesset ratifies the [Oslo Agreement](#) 61-50 with 8 abstentions. (September 23)

Gabon and Mauritius re-establish full diplomatic ties with Israel. (September 29)

Amitai Kapach killed by terrorist. (September 29)

Dror Forer and Aran Bachar are killed in Wadi Kelt by [Islamic Jihad](#) terrorists. (October 9)

Israel-PLO talks for implementing the [Declaration of Principles](#) begin in Taba. (October 13)

Multilateral talks on water are held in Beijing. (October 26-28)

Bet El resident Chaim Mizrachi stabbed to death by Arab terrorists. (October 30)

Local elections held. [Jerusalem](#) Mayor [Teddy Kollek](#) ousted by [Ehud Olmert](#). (November 2)

Arms control multilateral talks are held in Moscow. (November 2-4)

Economic development multilateral talks are held in Copenhagen. (November 8-9)



Suleiman al-Hawashle is run over and killed by terrorists at Shagai Junction. (November 9)

Ephraim Olevi killed by  [Hamas](#) terrorists in [Hebron](#). (November 11)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) visits the United States for talks with President Clinton and senior officials. (November 11-18)

Multilateral talks on environment are held in Cairo. (November 15-16)

Israel-PLO Economic Coordination Committee talks open in Cairo. (November 17)

Sgt. Chaim Drina stabbed to death by [Islamic Jihad](#) terrorists in [Gaza](#). (November 17)

Shalva Ozana and Yitzchak Weinstock shot to death by  [Hamas](#) terrorists in el-Bireh. (December 1)

[IDF](#) soldier David Masherti is shot to death by [Islamic Jihad](#) terrorists at Holom Junction. (December 5)

Mordechai and Sholom Lapid are killed by Arab terrorists in [Hebron](#). (December 6)

Meeting of Steering Committee on multilateral talks is held in Tokyo. (December 15-17)

Eliyahu Levin and Mayer Mendolovitz are shot to death by  [Hamas](#) terrorists in Betunia. (December 22)

Anatoly Kolisnikov is stabbed to death in Ashdod by [Fatah](#) terrorist. (December 23)

Lt.-Col. Meir Mintz is killed by terrorists in [Gaza](#). (December 24)

Yuval Golan is killed by terrorists in Adorayeem. (December 29)

Israel and the Holy See sign a Fundamental Agreement in [Jerusalem](#). (December 30)

Chaim Weizman and David Booblil are killed by [Fatah](#) terrorists in Ramle. (December 31)

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opens in Washington, DC.

Steven Spielberg releases *Shindler's List*.

Avraham Biram finds ancient inscription in [Tel Dan](#) about the dynasty of [King David](#); it is the first time his name appears outside the [Bible](#).

## 1994

OC Central Command Maj.-Gen. Nechemia Tamari and three other officers are killed in a helicopter crash. (January 12)

Gregory Izanov stabbed to death by [Hamass](#) terrorists at Erez crossing in [Gaza](#). (January 14)

President Clinton meets with President Assad in Geneva. (January 16)

Foreign Minister [Shimon Peres](#) and PLO Chairman [Yaaser Arafat](#) sign an agreement on security arrangements of [Jericho](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#). (February 9)

Baruch Goldstein kills 29 Muslim worshippers at the [Cave of Machpelah](#) in [Hebron](#). (February 25)

The Government appoints a Commission on Inquiry to investigate the events in Hebron. (February 27)

[Knesset](#) votes 93-1-7 to condemn the [Hebron](#) massacre. (February 28)

State commission of inquiry into the [Hebron](#) massacre begins holding hearings. (March 8)

"[Kach](#)" and "Kahane Chai" are outlawed by the Government. (March 13)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) holds talks in Washington with President Clinton and senior U.S. officials. (March 15-19)

The [Security Council adopts a resolution](#) condemning the Hebron massacre and calling for an international presence in that city. (March 18)

Israel-[PLO](#) agreement on Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) is reached. 160 observers (35 [Danish](#), 35 [Italian](#), 90 [Norwegian](#)) are deployed to Hebron for three months. (March 31)

[IDF](#) cadet Shachar Simoni kidnapped and killed in [Jerusalem](#) by [Hamass](#) terrorists.

Reflooding of 6,000 dunams of Lake Hula- dried up in the 1950's- is begun. (April 25)

Israel and the PLO sign an Economic Agreement in Paris. (April 29)

[Israel](#) and the [PLO](#) sign an agreement giving autonomy to [Jericho](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#). (May 4)

A 160-member Temporary International Presence in [Hebron](#) (TIPH) begins its mission. (May 8)

An independent list headed by Labor MK Chaim Ramon wins the [Histadrut](#) elections. (May 10)

[Knesset](#) approves [Gaza-Jericho Agreement](#) by a vote of 52-0. In a speech in a mosque in Johannesburg, [Arafat](#) calls for a [jihad](#) to liberate [Jerusalem](#); compares Gaza-Jericho Agreement to a temporary agreement made by [Mohammad](#) with the tribe of Kuraish. After Israel protests, [Yasser Arafat](#) says he had referred to a religious jihad, which has no military significance.

Israel [hands over](#) the [Jericho](#) area to Palestinian police. (May 13)

Israel completes its withdrawal from the [Gaza Strip](#) (May 18)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) and [King Hussein](#) of [Jordan](#) hold secret talks in London. (May 19)

[IDF](#) commandos kidnap [Hizballah](#) leader Mustafa Dirani, who in 1988 sold Navigator [Ron Arad](#) to the Iranians for \$300,000. (May 20)

Britain lifts its 12 year old embargo on arms sales to Israel. (May 26)

Vatican and Israel establish first ever diplomatic relations. (June 15)

State commission of inquiry into [Hebron](#) massacre releases its report. (June 26)

David Mishali killed by Fatah terrorists in [Tel Aviv](#). (June 26)

Yoram Skori was killed by  [Hamas](#) terrorist in Netafim. (July 1)

[Arafat](#) visits Gaza (July 1-4)

[Arafat](#) visits [Jericho](#) and swears in the Palestinian Council. (July 5)

Premier [Rabin](#) and Foreign Minister [Peres](#) receive the UNESCO Peace Prize in Paris. They also meet with [Arafat](#). (July 6)

[IDF](#) soldier Aryeh Frankental killed in Beersheba by  [Hamas](#) terrorist. (July 6)

Sarit Prigal killed in Harsina by  [Hamas](#) terrorists. (July 7)

Border Policeman Jacques Atias killed at Erez Checkpoint by [PA](#) police. (July 17)

Israel and Cape Verde establish diplomatic relations. (July 17)

Israel and [Jordan](#) start talks in the Arava. (July 18)

A [car bomb destroys the Jewish Community Center](#) in [Buenos Aires](#), killing 102 and wounding others. A radical Moslem organization linked to [Iran](#) claims responsibility. (July 18)

Lt. Guy Ovadia shot to death in Rafiach by  [Hamas](#) terrorists. (July 19)

Foreign Minister [Peres](#), Secretary of State Christopher and Jordan's Prime Minister Majali meet on the Jordanian side of the [Dead Sea](#) to launch the Israel-Jordan talks. (July 20)

[Implementation of Palestinian self-government in Gaza Strip and Jericho area.](#)

Full diplomatic relations with the [Holy See](#).

[Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty signed](#). (July 25)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) and King [Hussein](#) meet at the White House; they sign the [Washington Declaration](#) ending the state of war between Israel and Jordan. (July 25-26)

In two car bomb explosions in London, the Israeli Embassy and the offices of the Joint Israel Appeal are damaged. (July 26)

Uganda and Israel re-establish diplomatic relations severed in 1972. (July 30)

The [Knesset](#) ratifies the Washington Declaration, 91-3-2. (August 3)

Israel and Senegal restore diplomatic relations, suspended in 1973. (August 4)

Israel and Jordan open a border crossing post north of Eilat. King Hussein and Prime Minister [Rabin](#) meet in Aqaba. (August 8)

Israel and Ghana restore diplomatic relations. (August 9)

Ron Sobel shot and killed by [Hamas](#) terrorists in Kissufim. (August 14)

Agreement between Israel and the PLO on Early Empowerment in the West Bank initialed in Cairo. (August 24)

Israel and Morocco announce the opening of interest offices in Rabat and Tel Aviv. (September 1)

Rabin tells the Cabinet of a plan for limited withdrawal on the [Golan](#) over a three-year period. (September 8)

[Rabin](#) and [Arafat](#) meet at Erez checkpoint and agree to start preliminary talks on Palestinian elections and [IDF](#) re-deployment. (September 25)

[Saudi Arabia](#) and the Gulf States announce lifting of Secondary and Tertiary Economic Boycotts against Israel. (September 30)

[Tunisia](#) interest offices set up. (October 1)

An Israeli soldier is abducted by [Hamas](#) terrorists. Two Israelis are killed in [Jerusalem](#) by [Hamas](#). (October 9)

Israel and Rwanda resume diplomatic relations. (October 10)

An IDF attempt to free abducted soldier fails. (October 13)

[Yitzhak Rabin](#), [Shimon Peres](#) and [Yassir Arafat](#) are awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#). (October 14)

Cpl. Nachshon Wachsmann and Captain Nir Poraz are killed by terrorists in Bir Naballah. (October 14)

Israeli and Jordanian negotiators initial a peace treaty, which is unanimously approved by the government. (October 17)

Twenty-one Israelis and one Dutch citizen are murdered when a suicide bomber strikes on the #5 bus in [Tel Aviv](#). (October 19)

Israel announces completion of Jewish immigration from Syria. (October 19)

The Cabinet unanimously approves the Israel-Jordan peace treaty. (October 23)

Sgt. Ehud Roth and Sgt. Ilan Levy are kidnapped and shot to death by terrorists in Khan Yunis. (October 24)

President Clinton visits Israel. (October 25-27)



The [Knesset](#) ratifies the peace treaty with Jordan, 105-3. (October 25)

The Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty is signed in the Arava in the presence of President Clinton. (October 26)

Visit to Israel of President Clinton. He addresses the Knesset, holds talks with President Weizman, Prime Minister [Rabin](#) and Foreign Minister Peres. (October 27-28)

Israel opens a liaison office in [Morocco](#). (November 1)

The Tomb of the Patriarchs in [Hebron](#) reopens. (November 7)

Israel ratifies the peace treaty with Jordan. (November 8)

In a meeting between Rabin and [Yasser Arafat](#) at the Erez checkpoint, it is decided that the Palestinian Authority will assume additional responsibilities in the civilian sphere. (November 9)

[King Hussein](#) of [Jordan](#) makes his first public visit to Israel. (November 10)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) holds talks in the White House with Clinton. (November 21-22)

Israel transfers authority to the Palestinians in the fields of health and taxation, completing the process of early empowerment. (December 1)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#), Foreign Minister Peres, and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization [Yasser Arafat](#) are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. (December 10)

[Israel](#) and [Jordan](#) open embassies in each other's countries. (December 11)

The European Union announces finalization of principles of the new Israel-EU agreement. (December 19)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) visits Oman. (December 26)

## 1995

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) halts new construction in a West Bank settlement, stating that Israel's future lies in territorial compromise with the Palestinians. (January 2)

The government votes to establish a state commission of inquiry into the disappearance of [Yemenite immigrant](#) children between 1948-1954. (January 8)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) orders construction of bypass roads in the West Bank. (January 15)

Mubarak, [Rabin](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) meet in a Cairo summit to promote Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the Interim Agreement. (February 2)

Tanzania restores diplomatic relations with [Israel](#). (February 23)

Israel and Burundi resume diplomatic relations. (February 24)

Rabin reiterates the separation plan through a fence manned by [IDF](#) and dogs. (March 21)

Israel launches its first spy satellite into orbit. (April 6)

Israel confirms its intention to confiscate 130 acres of land in East [Jerusalem](#). (April 27)

U.S. [vetoes](#) a Security Council draft resolution condemning Israeli seizure of land in East [Jerusalem](#). (May 18)

The government suspends its plan to confiscate land in East [Jerusalem](#). (May 22)

Israel and [Syria](#) make small progress in talks on future security arrangements. (May 24)

Prime Minister [Rabin](#) holds talks in Cairo with President Mubarak. (June 9)

Worst fire in Israeli history hits [Jerusalem](#), near Shohesh and Neve Ilan. (July 2)

Israel and the PLO reach an agreement on redeployment of forces in the West Bank. (August 11)

Broadened [Palestinian self-government](#) implemented in [West Bank](#) and [Gaza Strip](#); [Palestinian Council](#) elected.

[Shimon Peres](#) becomes Prime Minister.

Treaty of Association is signed with the EU.

[Jerusalem](#) 3000 celebrations begin. (September 4)

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators initial the "[Oslo II](#)" agreement in Taba, Egypt. (September 24)

The government approves the "[Oslo II](#)" agreement 18-0-2. (September 27)

["Oslo II"](#) signed in Washington. (September 28)

The [Knesset](#) approves the "[Oslo II](#)" agreement 61-59. (October 6)

U.S. Congress approves a bill calling for the transfer of the U.S. embassy in Israel to [Jerusalem](#) no later than 1999. (October 24)

The second Middle East North Africa Economic summit is held in Amman. (October 29-30)

Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) [assassinated](#) at peace rally. (November 4)

Representatives and heads of state from all over the world , including King Hussein and [President Mubarak](#) attend Rabin's funeral in [Jerusalem](#). (November 6)

[High Court of Justice](#) rules that the air force cannot bar Alice Miller from its combat pilots' course based on her gender. (November 8)

The [PA](#) takes over Jenin, and deploys forces to surrounding villages.

The state commission of inquiry into the assassination of Prime Minister [Rabin](#) begins. (November 19)

Israel and the EU sign a trade agreement in Brussels. (November 20)

The IDF withdraws from six West Bank towns. (November 20)

The [Knesset](#) votes confidence in [Shimon Peres](#)' new government. (November 22)

Yigal Amir indicted for murdering Prime Minister Yitzchak [Rabin](#). (December 5)

A Jewish vehicle is fired upon by terrorists in Gush Etzion. One girl is shot in the back. (December 9)

IDF pulls out of [Nablus](#) a day earlier than scheduled. Palestinian forces arrive in Ramallah. Samiha Khalil announces her candidacy for presidency. (December 11)

Prime Minister Peres holds talks in Washington with President Clinton. (December 12-13)

Trial of Yigal Amir begins. (December 19)

Israel evacuates [Bethlehem](#), Palestinian police enter. (December 21)

Israeli army pulls out from 5 villages near Hebron: Dura, Yat-ta, Bani Naim, Thahariyeh, and Nuba. (December 26)

[IDF](#) leaves Ramallah. (December 27)

Israel and Syrian negotiators meet at [Wye Planation](#) near Washington. (December 27)

## 1996

[Hamas](#) master bomb-maker, Yihya Ayyash (the Engineer), is killed in

[Gaza](#) by booby-trapped telephone. (January 6)

King [Hussein](#) of Jordan visits Tel Aviv, holds talks with Prime Minister [Peres](#). (January 10)

Israel redeploys from Abu-Dis. Ahmed Qur'ei raises the Palestinian flag, and declares the city free. (January 17)

First election of Palestinian Council, [Arafat](#) becomes president with 90% of the vote. (Jan. 20)

Israel and [Oman](#) issue a joint statement. (January 28)

Prime Minister Peres decides to call early elections for the 14th Knesset to be held on May 29. (February 5)

[Yasser Arafat](#) sworn in as first elected President of Palestine. (February 12)

Twenty-five killed and about 90 wounded when Hamas suicide bombers attacks the #18 bus in [Jerusalem](#) and the hiking post at [Ashkelon](#) Junction. (February 25)

Peres warns Israel may delay its redeployment in Hebron as a result of the wave of suicide bombings. (February 28)

Another Hamas suicide bomber blows up a bus in [Jerusalem](#) killing 20 Israelis. (March 2)

A Palestinian suicide bomber blows himself up in the midst of a holiday shopping crowd in a Tel Aviv mall killing 14, wounding 130. (March 4)

President Clinton pledges to help Israel with high technology bomb detection devices. (March 5)

An anti-terrorist summit conference, called the Summit of the Peace Makers is held in Sharm-el-Sheikh, attended by 25 world leaders. Syria boycotts the summit (March 13)

President Clinton visits Israel. (March 14-15)

Yigal Amir convicted for the assassination of [Yitzchak Rabin](#). He received life and six additional years. (March 27)

Fundamentalist Arab [terrorism](#) against Israel escalates.

Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox wage battle against [Shabbat](#) traffic on Bar Ilan Street, [Jerusalem](#).

Operation Grapes of Wrath, retaliation against Lebanon for [Hizbullah](#) terrorists' attacks on northern [Israel](#). (April 11)

Palestine National Council (PNC) meets for first time since 1964 in Gaza. (April 22)

PNC votes to amend the [PLO Covenant](#) by 504 votes to 54, with 14 abstentions.

A cease fire in Lebanon is arranged by the U.S.. (April 28)

President Clinton and Prime Minister [Peres](#) issue a joint statement at the conclusion of talks in Washington. (April 30)

Israel decides to postpone redeployment in Hebron. (May 3)

The PLO announces it amended its [National Covenant](#) to remove anti-Israel sections. PLO refuses to announce changes and no changes appear on PLO website (May 4)

Yeshiva student David Reuvein Boim shot and killed by terrorists near Bet El.

[Jerusalem](#) celebrates its 3,000th anniversary as the capital of the Jewish state.

Israeli trade representation offices set up in [Oman](#) and [Qatar](#).

Final Status Talks between the PA and Israel begin in Taba. (May 5)

[Benjamin Netanyahu](#) wins the first direct election for Prime Minister. (May 29)



[Likud](#) forms [government](#) after elections for the [Fourteenth Knesset](#). (May 30)

President Arafat's plane inaugurates Gaza International Airport, coming from Sinai. (June 2)

Efrat and Yaron Unger shot to death by arab terrorists near Bet Shemesh. (June 9)

[Egypt](#) host the first [Arab League](#) Summit in six years. (June 22-23)

Israeli jets bomb a base of Abu Moussa's Palestinian National Liberation Movement in Lebanon. (July 2)

Israel eases the closure on the territories. (July 3)

Prime Minister Netanyahu holds talks in Washington with President Clinton. (July 9)

Prime Minister Netanyahu addresses the U.S. Congress, saying Israel will gradually ease its dependence on U.S. economic aid. (July 10)

The bodies of two IDF soldiers missing since the 1982 war in Lebanon are returned to Israel. Israel and the SLA release 45 Hizbollah prisoners and return the bodies of 123 terrorists killed by the IDF over the years. (July 21)

President Clinton denies clemency to Jonathan Pollard. (July 26)

The cabinet decides to terminate the freeze on construction in Judea-Samaria and GAZA placed by the previous government. (August 2)

The five-nation committee monitoring the Israel-Hizbullah cease-fire in Lebanon holds its first meeting in Naqura. (August 8)

Oman opens a trade office in [Tel Aviv](#), becoming the seventh Arab state to have an official presence in Israel. (August 11)

Talks between Israel and the PA resume after eight months' suspension. (August 14)

In a test, an Arrow 2 missile successfully intercepts and destroys a target missile. (August 20)

Netanyahu and [Yasser Arafat](#) meet for the first time at Erez Checkpoint. Both reiterate their commitment to implementing the 1995 Interim Agreement. (September 4)

Sgt. Sharon Edri kidnapped and shot to death by [Hamas](#) terrorists. (September 9)

Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs says his country postponed its decision to open a trade office in Israel. (September 22)

Israel opens a new exit to the [Western Wall](#) tunnel. Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) announces this in London. This triggers off a wave of Palestinian violence in the territories and [Jerusalem](#). (September 23)

In a wave of violence 14 Israelis and 56 Palestinians are killed in clashes (September 23-27)

Violence erupts after the opening of Hasmonean Tunnel alongside the [Temple Mount](#) and [Western Wall](#). (September 25)

The UN Security Council adopts a resolution condemning Israel for opening the tunnel. The U.S. abstained in the vote, which was carried by 14-0. (September 28)

Clinton holds bilateral talks with Netanyahu, [Yasser Arafat](#), and King Hussein. (October 1-2)

Azzam Azzam, an Israeli Druze working in an Israeli-Egyptian plant in Cairo, is arrested and charged with spying for Israel. (November 6)

The Government reinstates financial subsidies to all settlements in the territories. (December 13)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) hold talks in Erez. (December 24)

Israeli wins bronze medal in windsurfing competition at the [Atlanta Summer Olympics](#).

## 1997

[Agreement Between the State of Israel and the Holy See](#).

[Netanyahu](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) meet again in Erez. (January 5)

[King Hussein](#) visits [Gaza](#) and [Tel Aviv](#) for talks with [Yasser Arafat](#) and Netanyahu (January 12)

[Hebron Agreement](#) signed by [Netanyahu](#) and [Arafat](#). (January 14-15)

[Israel redeploy troops in Hebron](#). (January 15)

The [Knesset](#) approves the Hebron Protocol by 87 to 17 (one abstention).  
[The IDF completes its redeployment in Hebron](#). (January 16)

Helicopter crash kills 73 Israeli soldiers. (February 4)

Israel releases 30 Palestinian women prisoners. (February 11)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) and President Clinton meet in the White House. (February 13)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) meets [King Hussein](#) in Amman. (February 23)

Ministerial Committee on [Jerusalem](#) approves construction in Har Homa. (February 28)

Seven school girls are murdered by Jordanian soldier at Naharayim (March 13)

[King Hussein](#) pays condolence call to families. (March 16)

[Suicide bombers](#) kill 24 people in three separate attacks, one in [Tel Aviv](#) and two in [Jerusalem](#). (March 21)

An [Arab League](#) meeting calls on the Arab states to freeze ties with Israel. (April 1)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) meets with President Clinton at the White House. (April 7)

Israel and [Jordan](#) sign a water agreement (May 27)

Two consecutive [suicide bombings](#) in the Mahane Yehuda market in [Jerusalem](#) kill 16 people and wound 178 wounded: (July 30)

Israel and Croatia establish diplomatic relations. (August 21)

[Mossad](#) agents botch an assassination attempt on Khaled Mashal, a  [Hamas](#) official, in [Jordan](#). Israel releases Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in return for its agents. (September 24)

Israel and the Holy See sign a Legal Personality Agreement. (November 10)

Israel and [Jordan](#) sign an agreement on Irbid Industrial Zone. (November 16)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) visits the United States. (November 16-18)

Israeli wins silver medal at European Swimming Championship.

Christoph Meili, a guard for Switzerland's largest bank, reveals documents of transactions with the [Nazis](#).

## 1998

Israel celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Israel, Turkey, and the U.S. begin joint naval maneuvers in the Eastern Mediterranean. Jordan sends an observer. (January 7)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) meets President Clinton in the White House. The U.S. presents a plan for a three stage FRD of at least 10% of the West Bank. Netanyahu also meets twice with Secretary of State Albright.

(January 20)

[Yasser Arafat](#) holds talks with President Clinton. He rejects the 10% FRD plan. In a letter to Clinton he states which PLO Covenant clauses were annuled in May 1996. He also demands time out on Israel settlement expansion (January 22)

Finance Minister Neeman holds talks in Washington on phasing down the \$1.2 billion of America's economic aid to Israel (January 27-28)

In view of mounting tension over Iraq, Israel and the U.S. Defense Department inaugurate an emergency hot line. (January 29)

The PLO Executive Committee claims to approve by voice vote the annulment of offensive [PLO Covenant](#) clauses given to President Clinton. In 2004, PLO Foreign Minister [Farouk Kaddoumi](#) denied that the charter was ever annuled. (January 31)

[King Hussein](#) sends President [Weizman](#) a check for \$1 million for compensation to families of seven girls slain by a Jordanian soldier in Naharayim in 1997. (February 8)

The U.S. offers Israel defense weapons and says it will provide Israel with an early warning sytem in case of an attack on [Iraq](#). (February 8)

The U.S. sends 10 Patriot missile batteries to Israel. (February 19)

Israel apologizes to the Swiss government for the incident involving its agents. Mossad head Danny Yatom resigns. (February 27)

[Netenyahu](#) offers Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in return for adequate Lebanese security guarantees. Lebanon rejects the proposal. (March 1)

[Ezer Weizman](#) is re-elected for a second term as Israel's [president](#). (March 4)

The [UN General Assembly](#), in an emergency session on the Har Homa issue, condemns Israel by a vote of 120 for, three against, five abstentions.

Israel and Turkey sign a trade protocol in Ankara. (March 24)

In a letter to Clinton, 81 senators urge him not to issue the FRD plan. The PA announces acceptance of the U.S. proposal for 13% FRD (April 3)

Prime Minister [Netanyahu](#) holds talks in Cairo with President [Mubarak](#) - their first meeting since May 27, 1997. (April 28)

21 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives call on Clinton not to pressure Israel on the FRD plan. (May 6)

The [Knesset](#) adopts a bill requiring an absolute majority of Knesset members, and referendum majority before any territorial concessions are made on the Golan Heights. The bill won final approval on January 26, 1999. (July 22)

Netanyahu says that Israel is now proposing a new FRD proposal based on 10% + 3% nature preserve in the Judean desert. (July 27)

Israel transfers to Jordan the \$50 million it owes under the Peace and Stability Fund agreement (July 30)

The U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam are destroyed leaving 256 dead and thousands wounded. The IDF dispatches a rescue team to Nairobi. (August 7)

[Netanyahu](#), Clinton and [Yasser Arafat](#) hold a meeting in the White House clearing the way for summit talks in October. (September 28)

Israel and the PA negotiate an agreement at the Wye River Plantation. (October 15-23)

Netanyahu and [Yasser Arafat](#) sign the Wye River Memorandum in the White House in the presence of President Clinton and King Hussein. (October 23)

In a speech in [Nablus](#), [Yasser Arafat](#) calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state with East [Jerusalem](#) as its capital on May 4, 1999 (November 14)

The [Knesset](#) adopts the [Wye River Memorandum](#) by 75 in favor, 19 against, nine abstentions and 13 absent. (November 17)



The [IDF](#) carries out the first of the three FRDs outlined in the Wye agreement. Israel releases 250 Palestinian prisoners. (November 20)

Israel allows the opening of Gaza International Airport (November 24)

The Palestinian National Council in Gaza reaffirms the annulment of the anti-Israel provisions of the PLO Covenant, in the presence of President Clinton. (December 14)

The Knesset votes 81-30, four abstentions and five absent, to dissolve itself. Next elections to be held on May 17, 1999 (December 21).

## 1999

[Reform](#) Movement's rabbinical body (CCAR) adopts new platform of principles which shows some openness to Jewish ritual, while reaffirming Reform's ideology of personal autonomy.

[Fifteenth Knesset](#) elections.

Death of [King Hussein](#) of [Jordan](#) (February 7)

[Ehud Barak](#) is elected Prime Minister. One Israel party wins 26 seats, Likud - 19, Shas - 17, Meretz - 10, Shinui, Merkaz and Yisrael b'Aliya - 6 each. Arab parties win 10, the NRP - 5, UTJ - 5, National Union and Yisrael Beitenu - 4 each, and Am Ehad - 2 (17 May)

After [Hizbullah](#) fires rockets into Israel, the IDF strikes bridges and power stations near and in Beirut. Hizbullah fires 36 rockets into Israel killing two civilians. (24 June)

[King Hassan](#) of [Morocco](#) dies and is succeeded by his son King Mohammed VI. [Barak](#) attends his funeral on 25 July. (23 July)

Israel and the Republic of Georgia sign a Memorandum of Understanding on defense cooperation. Israel and Uganda sign an agreement to expand economic ties. (27 July)

[Barak](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) sign the second Wye Accord in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Secretary Albright, President Mubarak and King Abdullah also sign as witnesses. (4 September)

Israel releases 199 of 350 Palestinian prisoners in the framework of the [Wye II Accords](#) (9 September)

Israel transfers 7% of the [West Bank](#) land from Area C to Area B (10 September)

Israel and the [PA](#) sign the [Gaza-West Bank Safe Passage Protocol](#) (5 October)

[Barak](#) orders dismantling of 15 of 42 unauthorized settlements built since October 1998. Eleven are to remain; in 16, no new buildings are to be allowed. (12 October)

Israel releases additional 151 Palestinian prisoners (15 October)

Former South African President Nelson Mandela holds talks in [Jerusalem](#) with Israel's leaders (18 October)

Israel opens the safe passage road from [Gaza](#) to the [West Bank](#) (25 October)

Israel and Mauritania raise their missions to embassies (28 October)

President Clinton holds talks in Oslo with [Barak](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) on Final Status Negotiations. [Barak](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) also have a private meeting. Clinton meets with both the next day (1 November)

[Yasser Arafat](#) refuses to sign the map for the next FRD (11 November)

[Barak](#) and [Yasser Arafat](#) meet but fail to reach an understanding on the next FRD. Israel decides to delay the second stage of the Wye II FRD (14 November)

[Barak](#) tells the cabinet that an Israel-Syria agreement is possible within a few weeks. Addressing the [Knesset](#), [Barak](#) says Israel may have to pay a "heavy territorial price" for peace with Syria. He wins a vote of confidence 47 for, 31 against, 24 abstentions and 18 absent. (13

December)

Israel and Syria resume [talks](#) in Washington, DC. [Barak](#), Clinton, and Syrian Foreign Minister Shara hold an opening ceremony at the White House. (15 December)

[Israel-Syria talks](#) end in Washington, DC. They will resume near Washington in early January (16 December)

A gunman goes on a shooting rampage at a Jewish community center in Los Angeles, injuring five.

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## Modern Israel & the Diaspora

(2000-2004)

[2000](#)

[2001](#)

[2002](#)

[2003](#)

[2004](#)

### 2000

Connecticut Senator [Joseph Lieberman](#) named first Jewish vice presidential candidate of a major political party - becomes first Jew on a major party ticket.

Israeli and Syrian leaders convene in [Shepardstown](#), WV to negotiate a peace deal. Israeli Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#) and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara fail to make a deal. (3-10 January)

Israel transfers to the [PA](#) 3% of land from Area C to Area B and 2% from Area B to PA-controlled Area A. (5 January)

The [Israel-Syria](#) talks end after the U.S. proposes a [draft agreement](#) (10 January)

Israel and Jordan renew their bilateral trade agreement (12 January)

The U.S. announces freezing of the Israel-Syria talks due to fundamental differences (17 January)

Syria says it will not resume talks with Israel unless Israel pledges to withdraw to the 5 June 1967 lines (19 January)

Israel cancels plans to send experts to Washington, D.C. to discuss a working paper on Syria (25 January)

The Multilateral Steering Committee meets in Moscow (1 February)

Israel begins the deployment of the [Arrow 2 missile system](#) (14 March)

Israel and PA negotiations meet at Boiling Air Force Base near Washington, DC. Israel hands over 6.1% of Area B to Area A. The PA now controls 18.2% of the West Bank (Area A), and partially controls 21.8% (Area B). (21 March)

[Visit to Israel of Pope John Paul II](#) (21-26 March)

President Clinton meets President Assad in Geneva; he later admits that the Israel-Syrian differences cannot be bridged (26 March)

PM [Barak](#) and President Clinton hold talks in the White House on FAPS, withdrawal from Lebanon and the Phalcon deal with China. (11 April)

Israel is given temporary membership in the UN regional group [Western European and Other Groups](#). Israel is allowed to take part in WEOG activities in New York, but no other UN office. (24 April)

PM [Barak](#) and Arafat meet in Ramallah. [Barak](#) says that Israel will shortly cede three West Bank villages near Jerusalem to Palestinian control. (7 May)

Israel and Jordan sign an agreement to proceed with plans for the construction of the Akaba-Eilat airport (May 12)

It is revealed that back channel talks between Israel and the PA took place in Stockholm. Israel was represented by Internal Security Minister [Ben-Ami](#). (14 May)

The cabinet, and later the Knesset, approve the transfer of Aby Dis, Izariyah and Sawarah al-Sharquiya to Area A. (15 May)

Following attacks on Israeli civilians near Jericho, Israel suspends the Stockholm talks and postpones transfer of the three villages near Jerusalem to the PA. (21 May)

Election of Jorg Haider, leader of the ultra-right Freedom party, to Austria's parliament.

Deborah Lipstadt, U.S. academic, is sued by [Holocaust denier David Irving](#) in England for libel. The case is ultimately dismissed.

[Unilateral withdrawal](#) of Israeli troops from [Lebanon](#). (23 May-1 June)

President Clinton and PM [Barak](#) meet in Lisbon. Clinton says FAPS is within reach. (1 June)

Birthright Israel is created by philanthropists Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt with the goal of sending thousands of young adults on a free trip to Israel.

Federal judges approve \$1.25 billion to settle [Holocaust claims](#) brought against Swiss banks.

Syrian President [Hafez Al-Assad](#) dies in Damascus. He was quickly succeeded by his son, [Bashar Assad](#). (June 10)

UN Secretary-General Annan certifies that Israel completed its withdrawal from Lebanon. This certification is endorsed on 18 June by the Security Council. (16 June)

President [Ezer Weizman](#) resigns his office. (10 July)

[Camp David Summit](#). (July 11-25)

Israel cancels the Phalcon deal with China (12 July)

The [Camp David](#) meeting ends in failure. President Clinton and PM [Barak](#) blame [Arafat](#) for the failure; Clinton says that Barak was much more



flexible (25 July)

[Moshe Katsav](#) is elected Israel's eighth president (31 July)

[UNIFIL](#) completes its deployment along the Blue Line (5 August)

The PLO Central Committee votes to postpone plans to declare Palestinian statehood (10 September).

Visit of [Ariel Sharon](#) to the [Temple Mount](#). (September 28)

Clashes erupt between Palestinians and Israeli security forces (29 September)

Serious clashes in the West Bank and Gaza spread to a number of Israeli cities. 13 Israeli Arabs are killed (1 October)

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators agree to a limited cease-fire during talks in Paris between Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#), [PA](#) President [Yasser Arafat](#) and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The cease-fire only lasts a few hours before violence is renewed. (October 4)

Destruction of [Joseph's Tomb](#) after Israeli forces withdraw. (October 7)

Three Israeli soldiers are kidnapped by [Hizbullah](#) on the Israel-Lebanon line (7 October)

Lynching of Israeli reservists in Ramallah. (October 12)

Israeli helicopters attack Palestinian targets in Gaza and Ramallah (12 October)

Destruction of the Shalom al Yisrael Synagogue in [Jericho](#). (October 12)

[Oman](#) closes its trade office in Tel Aviv. [Morocco](#) recalls its envoy from Israel (October 13).

Sharm El-Sheikh Summit attended by President Clinton, President Mubarak, King Abdullah, EU, and Israeli and Palestinian leaders who agree to cease-fire. (October 16-17)

PM [Barak](#) and [Arafat](#) reach oral understanding on ending the uprising.  
President Clinton decided to appoint an international inquiry commission (letter headed by Senator Mitchell). (17 October)

Cease-fire ends when new clashes erupt. (October 20)

PM [Barak](#) suspends the peace process (22 October)

In the wake of an Arab League summit decision, Tunisia demands Israel close its trade office in Tunis.

The U.S. names the Mitchell Commission members (7 November)

[Qatar](#) orders the Israel trade mission in Doha to close (9 November)

PM [Barak](#) meets with President Clinton in Washington, D.C. (12 November)

Egypt recalls its ambassador from Israel (21 November)

PM [Barak](#) announces that he will resign on 10 December and call elections for the office of prime minister within two months. Former premier [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), not a Knesset member, cannot run against him unless the Knesset dissolves itself, which it does not (9 December)

Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#) resigns hoping to win a mandate in a new election for his peace policies. (December 10)

Investigation into causes of Palestinian-Israeli violence allegedly sparked by [Sharon](#) visit to [Temple Mount](#) is initiated under the leadership of former U.S. Senator George Mitchell. (December 11)

[The Knesset decides not to dissolve itself, but to allow Netanyahu to run.](#)  
He decides not to run (19 December).

President Clinton presents the Israeli and PA negotiating teams with a [peace plan](#) and demands acceptance by Barak and Arafat within five days. (22 December)

[Barak](#) says he is prepared to accept the Clinton plan with no reservations

as long as the PA does the same (25 December)

[Arafat](#) says he cannot accept the Clinton plan without additional clarifications (27 December)

President Clinton says he will not agree to further talks unless [Arafat](#) accepts his plan. (28 December)

## 2001

CIA Director Tenet holds talks on security issues with Israeli and PA officials (6 January)

Peace talks are held at Egyptian town of Taba, but break up after [Arafat](#) gives a vitriolic speech to an international forum accusing Israel of being "fascist." (January 21-27)

[Election](#) of [Ariel Sharon](#) as Prime Minister of Israel. (Feb. 6)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (March 20)

The [Mitchell Commission](#) issues its report. (May 21)

U.S. CIA Director [George Tenet negotiates a cease-fire](#), but Palestinians break it within a few hours of its announcement. (June 12)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (June 26)

Israel insists on seven days of calm before it will resume peace talks with Palestinians, but violence continues to escalate. (July 15)

One of the worst of a series of suicide bombings and other [terrorist attacks](#) occurs when a Palestinian blows himself up at a downtown [Jerusalem](#) pizzeria, Sbarro, killing 15 and wounding more than 130. (August 9)

The [UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance](#), Durban, South Africa (August 31-September 8)

U.S. diplomats walk out of [UN conference in Durban](#) when organizers attempt to equate [Zionism](#) with racism. (September 6)

Terrorists crash airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Thousands of Palestinians take to the streets to [celebrate](#) while most of the world mourns and expresses outrage. (September 11)

[Arafat](#) declares a cease-fire under pressure from the United States and Israel withdraws forces it had moved into Palestinian-controlled territories. (September 18)

Israeli Tourism Minister [Rehavam Ze'evi](#) is assassinated by Palestinian terrorists from the [PFLP](#). Israel responds by sending troops into six Palestinian cities in the [West Bank](#). (October 17)

[President Bush](#) addresses [U.N. General Assembly](#) and for the first time an American president formally lays out a vision of a Palestinian state living in peace beside Israel. (November 10)

[President Bush](#) sends Anthony Zinni to try to mediate an Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire. (November 26)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (December 2)

[President Bush](#) becomes the first American president to host a reception celebrating [Chanukah](#) in the White House residence (December 10)

Israeli cabinet declares [Arafat](#) "no longer relevant" after a series of horrific Palestinian [terrorist attacks](#). (December 12)

U.S. [vetoes UN Security Council](#) draft resolution that would have established an international monitoring force in Israel. (December 15)

Again under pressure from the United States, [Arafat](#) issues a call for a cease-fire, but various Palestinian factions ignore him. (December 16)

Israel confines [Arafat](#) to his Ramallah office until he arrests the killers of Israeli Tourism Minister [Rehavam Ze'evi](#). (December 22)

## 2002

Israel captures [Karine-A](#), a ship laden with 50 tons of weapons from [Iran](#) bound for the [Palestinian Authority](#). (January 3)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (January 7)

A suicide bomber kills one man and injures more than 100 other people in [Jerusalem](#) in the latest of a series of [terrorist incidents](#). This one is distinct because it is the first case of a female suicide bomber. (January 27)

Israel rejects [Saudi peace plan](#). (February 18)

Zinni returns for a third attempt to achieve a cease-fire. This follows a decision by [Sharon](#) to drop his demand for seven days of quiet before he will enter negotiations and a period of Israeli restraint in reaction to a number of [terrorist attacks](#). (March 14)

Twenty-eight people are killed and 134 injured when a suicide bomber blows himself up at a [Passover](#) seder in a [Netanya](#) hotel. (March 27)

["Operation Defensive Shield"](#). (March 28-April 17)

[Sharon](#) declares [Arafat](#) an "enemy" of Israel and sends troops to root out the terror infrastructure in the [Palestinian Authority](#). Israeli forces surround Arafat's office and keep him in "isolation." (March 29)

Terrorists take over St. Mary's Church grounds in [Bethlehem](#) and hold the priest and a number of nuns there against their will. The terrorists used the Church as a firing position, from which they shot at IDF soldiers in the area. That same day, Palestinian gunmen entered the [Church of the Nativity](#). (April 2)

Palestinian officials say deal is reached to expel six to nine Palestinian terrorists holed up in the [Church of the Nativity](#) to [Italy](#), and transfer more than 30 others to a [Gaza](#) prison guarded by American and British jailers. (May 6)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (May 7)

After another plan falls through, a breakthrough in the Bethlehem siege is announced when [Italy](#) and [Spain](#) agree to take some of the terrorists, while [Austria](#), [Greece](#), Luxembourg and [Ireland](#) taking the rest. (May 9)

Palestinians leave the [Church of the Nativity](#), bringing an end to the standoff. (May 10)

“Operation Determined Path” is a new military operation to root out terrorists in the territories following three major terrorist attacks. Israel begins to erect [security fence](#) to prevent terrorist infiltration into Israel and major [settlements](#). (June)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (June 10)

President Bush chooses to exercise [waiver](#) to avoid moving the U.S. Embassy to [Jerusalem](#) as called for in the [Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act](#). He argues that it would interfere with the president’s authority to formulate foreign policy. (June 17)

[President Bush calls](#) on the Palestinians to elect new leaders, eradicate terrorism and create institutional reforms, with the vision of a Palestinian state by 2005. In the speech, Bush also calls for Israel to withdraw to its September 2000 borders and to end its settlement activity as progress is made toward security. (June 24)

Nefesh b'Nefesh, a new organization founded to encourage North American [aliya \(immigration to Israel\)](#), launches first chartered flight of 400 North Americans making aliya at one time - a first in Israel's history. Nefesh b'Nefesh flight is also first time in history that Israel's [Interior Ministry \(Misrad HaPanim\)](#) processes olim (immigrants) on the flight to Israel. In 2003, Nefesh b'Nefesh brings approximately 1,000 new immigrants to Israel from North America. (June)

[President Bush](#) chooses to exercise waiver to avoid moving the U.S. Embassy to [Jerusalem](#) as called for in the [Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act](#). He argues that it would interfere with the president’s authority to formulate foreign policy. (Sept. 30)

Drafts of the [road map](#)” for Israeli-Palestinian peace, crafted by the



Quartet — the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia — are leaked to the media. The plan calls for a three-staged approach to peace, leading to an interim Palestinian state after elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the creation of a permanent state at the end of the road. Israelis argue that progress on the road map is based on a timeline, rather than measuring compliance with the plan. (October)

President Bush and [Ariel Sharon](#) meet in Washington. Sharon agrees to release \$400 million in Palestinian tax revenue that had been frozen, and Bush gives Sharon a draft version of the road map. The two leaders also work to coordinate the right to retaliate if attacked by [Iraq](#). (Oct. 16)

## 2003

Elections for the [16th Knesset](#). (January 28)

[Mahmoud Abbas \(Abu Mazen\)](#) is appointed the new Palestinian prime minister. (March 10)

U.S.-led war against [Iraq](#) commences. (March 19)

The [road map](#) is officially delivered to [Ariel Sharon](#) and [Mahmoud Abbas](#). (April 30)

Allied military operations in [Iraq](#) end. (May 1)

[Ariel Sharon](#) and [Mahmoud Abbas](#) hold first summit meeting. (May 17)

After White House officials acknowledge Israel's [concerns](#) about the [road map](#) in a statement, [Ariel Sharon](#) officially accepts it. (May 23)

Israeli Cabinet [approves road map](#) (May 25)

President Bush meets with Arab leaders in [Egypt](#). He says Israel “must deal with the [settlements](#)” and make sure there is a contiguous Palestinian state. Arab leaders endorse the [road map](#) and agree to crack down on terrorism and its sources of funding. (June 3)

[President Bush](#) meets in Aqaba, [Jordan](#), with [Ariel Sharon](#), [Mahmoud](#)

[Abbas](#) and Jordan's [King Abdullah](#). Abbas calls for an end to the Palestinian "armed intifada" and Sharon says that he understands the Palestinians' need for "territorial continuity" in the [West Bank](#). Bush names John Wolf as a new Middle East envoy, charged with monitoring implementation of the [road map](#). (June 4)

The first Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) [conference](#) on [anti-Semitism](#) takes place in [Vienna](#). (June 19)

[Ariel Sharon](#) meets with [President Bush](#) at the White House. (July 29)

[Attack](#) on [Jerusalem](#) bus kills 22. (August 19)

[Mahmoud Abbas \(Abu Mazen\)](#) resigns as Palestinian prime minister. (September 6)

[Ahmed Qureia \(Abu Alaa\)](#) is named Palestinian prime minister. (September 7)

Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the [Reform](#) Movement's synagogue arm, renames itself the Union for Reform Judaism, after 130 years of being the UAHC. (November 7)

[President Bush](#) signs the [Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act of 2003](#) (December 17)

## 2004

Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) addresses the central committee of the [Likud](#) Party to affirm his "[Disengagement Plan](#)" for unilateral withdrawal, which he announced in December 2003 at the Herzliya Conference. Sharon informs the committee that, as Prime Minister of Israel, and head of the Likud party, he plans on going forth with his plan even if the Central Committee refuses to go along with him. (January 5)

The [IDF](#) kills [Hamas](#) founder [Sheikh Ahmad Yassin](#). (March 22)

[Abd al-Aziz Rantissi](#) chosen as new leader of [Hamas](#). (March 24)

U.S. [vetoes Security Council](#) Resolution condemning Israel for killing [Ahmad Yassin](#). (March 25)

President [Bush](#) commends Israeli Prime Minister Sharon's withdrawal plan. (April 14)

Israeli security forces kill [Abd al-Aziz Rantisi](#). (April 17)

Israeli Army Radio reports that following the assassination of [Abdel Aziz Rantisi](#), [Mahmoud Zahar](#) becomes the leader of [Hammas](#). [Hammas](#) did not publicly announce Rantisi's successor out of fear that Israel would target him. (April 18)

The second Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) [conference](#) on [anti-Semitism](#) issues [declaration](#) to fight anti-Semitism. (April 28-29)

U.S. Court rules [John Demjanjuk](#) was a [Nazi](#) guard. (April 30)

U.S. imposes [sanctions](#) on [Syria](#). (May 11)

[Marwan Barghouti convicted of murder](#) for his involvement in three [terrorist](#) attacks in Israel that killed five people. He was acquitted for 33 other murders due to a lack of evidence of his direct involvement in those crimes. (May 19)

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# Ambassador to Attend Knesset Inauguration, But U.S. Policy on Jerusalem Remains Unchanged

(August 22, 1966)

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*This telegram permits the U.S. Ambassador to [Israel](#) to accept an invitation to the opening of the new [Knesset](#) (Israeli parliament) building in the western-section [Jerusalem](#). The U.S. Government requests that this invitation not be spotlighted and reiterates its policy that Jerusalem is not the capital of Israel and it should be an internationalized city.*

---

Circular Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel/1/

Washington, August 22, 1966, 10:53 p.m.

33056. Ref: Depcirtel 2464, June 15./2/

1. Dept authorizes Ambassador Barbour to accept anticipated formal Israeli Government invitation to attend inauguration ceremonies new Knesset building Jerusalem August 29-31.
2. We consider this inauguration one-time affair that is not to be regarded as precedent or pattern for future nor as representing any change in USG policy on status of Jerusalem. USG continues to support 1948 UN General

Assembly resolution that provided for international status Jerusalem under UN administration, and does not recognize Jerusalem as de jure capital of Israel. We trust attendance of official Americans at Knesset opening will not be spotlighted. These points being made to Israeli Embassy here and should be reiterated by Embassy to GOI at appropriate time.

3. Department is informing British, Canadian, German, Belgian and Italian Embassies here since they previously queried us on US position. Embassy Paris may draw on above at its discretion in speaking to GOF.

Rusk

/1/Source: Department of State, Central Files, POL 15-2 ISR. Confidential. Drafted by Wolle on August 17; cleared by Symmes and Hare and in substance by UK Country Director J. Harold Shullaw, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Spanish Sahara, and Tunisia Country Director John F. Root, Edward W. Schaefer of AFNE, and Kinsolving; and approved and initialed by Rusk. Repeated to Algiers, Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Bonn, Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Jidda, Khartoum, Kuwait, London, Ottawa, Paris, Rabat, Rome, Tripoli, and Tunis and pouched to Taiz.

/2/Circular telegram 2464, June 15, summarizes a conversation that day between Lebanese Ambassador El Ahdab and Davies, in which El Ahdab expressed concern over the possible attendance by Ambassador Barbour at the ceremonial opening of the new Knesset in Jerusalem. (Ibid.)

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Source: "Circular Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel" in Smith, Louis J. (Ed.). [\*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, V. 20, Arab-Israeli Dispute 1967-1968\*](#). DC: [GPO](#), 2001.

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**Warder Cresson****(1798-1860)**

Warder Cresson's journey to [Jerusalem](#), and to [Judaism](#), took a convoluted path. Born in Philadelphia in 1798, Cresson was raised a Quaker. He became a wealthy farmer in rural Pennsylvania, married and had a son. He also became a lifelong seeker of religious truth. By the 1840s, Cresson had become, in turn, a Shaker, a Mormon, a Seventh-Day Adventist and a Campbellite. The latter two denominations believed that the Second Coming of Christ was close at hand. Cresson became notorious in Philadelphia for religious "haranguing in the streets," warning all within earshot of the approaching apocalypse.

In 1844, Cresson expressed his certainty that God was about to gather the Jewish people in Jerusalem as a prelude to the "end of days." Cresson wrote, "God must choose some medium to manifest and act through, in order to bring about his designs and promises in this visible world; ... This medium or recipient is the present poor, despised, outcast Jew ... God is about gathering them again [in Jerusalem]." Cresson decided to move to Jerusalem to witness the great event. His family stayed behind.

Before departing, Cresson volunteered to work as the first American consul in Jerusalem, which was then a part of Syria. His Pennsylvania congressman, Edward Joy Morris, lobbied the State Department to have him appointed. Soon after Cresson sailed, however, a former cabinet official informed John C. Calhoun, then Secretary of State, that Cresson was mentally unstable. Calhoun dispatched a letter to Cresson, which reached him in Jerusalem, informing him that his appointment had been rescinded.

Cresson decided to stay on in Jerusalem despite this disappointment. He had come as an evangelical Christian to witness God's ingathering of the Jewish Diaspora. His time in Jerusalem, however, drew him to become a Jew. The impoverished, deeply religious Jews he found in Jerusalem, who were living with only the barest necessities, touched Cresson's heart. Cresson was offended by the "soul snatching" behavior of Christian missionaries who attempted to bribe some Jews with food and clothing into accepting conversion. He wrote, "The conversions which have been reported . . . [by] the Protestant Episcopal Mission were owing to the wants of the converts, not to their conviction." He expressed admiration for those Jews who resisted conversion despite the material incentives.

As historian Abraham J. Karp notes, "By 1847 Cresson already felt himself more Jew than Christian." In March 1848, Cresson took the plunge and converted. "I became fully satisfied," he wrote, "that I could never obtain Strength and Rest but by doing as Ruth did, and saying to her Mother-in-Law: ... 'thy People shall be my people, and thy God my God' ... I was circumcised, entered the Holy Covenant, and became a Jew."

To close his affairs in America, Cresson returned to Philadelphia, where he was greeted by trouble. "Soon after my return," Cresson wrote, "I found that there was a growing OPPOSITION and ENMITY toward the course I had taken." Cresson's wife and son started a civil "Inquisition of Lunacy" to have Cresson declared insane for choosing Judaism. The jury declared Cresson a lunatic. In 1850, Cresson appealed the verdict and received a new trial. The press gave it sensational coverage. More than 100 witnesses testified. The jury ultimately found for Cresson. An editorial in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* hailed the verdict "as settling forever ... the principle that a man's 'religious opinions' never can be made the test of his sanity."

During the four years Cresson spent in Philadelphia waiting for his trial to end, he worshipped at Congregation Mikveh Israel, lived according to [halachah](#) and participated in Jewish communal life. At some point, he divorced. He also took a new name: Michael Boaz Israel. In 1852, Cresson/Israel sailed for Jerusalem, this time as a Jew. He brought with him a self-published plan "for the Promotion of Agricultural Pursuits [and] for the Establishment of a Soup-House for the Destitute Jews in Jerusalem." Cresson's desire for a soup house was to "prevent any attempts being made to take advantage of the necessities of our poor brethren" that would "FORCE them into a pretended conversion."

His vision for agricultural development was far reaching, anticipating later [Zionist](#) principles. Cresson called for "the Restoration and Consolidation of all Israel to their own land ... because Unity and Consolidation is Strength." This strength would come from agriculture, providing the ingathered Jewish people with a sustenance denied it for hundreds of years. To prove his plan could work, Cresson announced that he was starting a model farm in the Valley of Rephaim, outside Jerusalem, "to introduce an improved system of English and American Farming in Palestine." He hoped that a Jewish agricultural Palestine "a great center to which all who rest may come and find rest to their persecuted souls."

Cresson's planned model farm never developed for want of capital, but he continued to pray for its success. In the mid-1850s, he married Rachel Moleano and became an honored member of Jerusalem's Sephardic community. When he died in 1860, he was buried on the Mount of Olives "with such honors as are paid only to a prominent rabbi." After a long journey, Warder Cresson found his spiritual home in Jerusalem as Michael Boaz Israel.

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Source: [American Jewish Historical Society](#) *in honor of Rabbi Abraham J. Karp*.

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# Clinton Vetoes Bill Strengthening U.S. Position on Jerusalem as Israel's Capital

(November 1999)

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The president vetoed the fiscal year 2000 Commerce-Justice-State spending bill, which funds the U.S. contribution to the United Nations and international peacekeeping operations, among other things.

Though the president vetoed the bill largely for reasons concerning domestic spending issues, he did comment in his veto message on the two "Jerusalem provisions" in the bill, inserted by Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC). One provision would require that official U.S. government documents refer to [Jerusalem](#) as Israel's capital, while the other would require the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem to report to the Embassy in Tel Aviv, rather than directly to the State Department in Washington.

In his veto message, the president wrote that the "bill includes a number of provisions regarding the conduct of foreign affairs that raise serious constitutional concerns. Provisions concerning Jerusalem are objectionable on constitutional, foreign policy, and operational grounds. The actions called for by these provisions would prejudice the outcome of the [Israeli-Palestinian permanent status negotiations](#), which have recently begun and which the parties are committed to concluding within a year."

White House and congressional negotiators will now meet in an attempt to work out a compromise bill that the president can sign.

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Source: [AIPAC](#)

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# Congress Calls for Clearer Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital

(September 30, 2002)

The Foreign Relations Authorization Act (H.R. 1646), signed by President Bush, includes the following provisions (Sec. 214, 215):

- The Congress maintains its commitment to relocating the United States Embassy in [Israel](#) to [Jerusalem](#) and urges the President, pursuant to the [Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995](#), to immediately begin the process of relocating the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.
- No funds may be spent on the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem, which deals mostly with Palestinian issues, until the post comes under the supervision of the U.S. ambassador to Israel. Currently, the U.S. consul general in Jerusalem reports directly to the State Department.
- All federal documents listing countries and their capitals must identify Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. American citizens born in Jerusalem can demand that U.S. government-issued documents, such as passports and birth certificates, identify Israel as their birthplace.
- The Secretary of State is to report to Congress within 60 days on U. S. efforts to ensure and promote Israel's full participation in the world diplomatic community.

The White House subsequently issued a statement saying that it considered these provisions nonbinding and that the administration would



not implement them. The resolution, President Bush said, "would, if construed as mandatory rather than advisory, impermissibly interfere with the president's constitutional authority to formulate the position of the United States, speak for the nation in international affairs, and determine the terms on which recognition is given to foreign states."

The President signed the legislation to obtain the funds for the State Department and claimed the Jerusalem provisions were an "advisory not mandatory." The administration maintains that Jerusalem is a "permanent status issue" that has to be resolved between Palestinians and Israelis.

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Source: [CNN](#), (October 1, 2002) and other news services.

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# House Resolution Commemorating 30th Anniversary of Reunification Jerusalem

## House Resolution 60

(June 10, 1997)

Whereas for 3,000 years Jerusalem has been the focal point of Jewish religious devotion;

Whereas Jerusalem today is also considered a holy city by members of the Christian and Muslim faiths;

Whereas there has been a continuous Jewish presence in Jerusalem for three millennia and a Jewish majority in the city since the 1840's;

Whereas the once thriving Jewish majority of the historic Old City of Jerusalem was driven out by force during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War;

Whereas from 1948 to 1967 Jerusalem was a divided city and Israeli citizens of all faiths as well as Jewish citizens of all states were denied access to holy sites in the area controlled by Jordan;

Whereas in 1967 Jerusalem was reunited by Israel during the conflict known as the Six Day War;

Whereas since 1967 Jerusalem has been a united city, and persons of all religious faiths have been guaranteed full access to holy sites within the

city;

Whereas this year marks the 30th year that Jerusalem has been administered as a unified city in which the rights of all faiths have been respected and protected;

Whereas in 1990 the United States Senate and House of Representatives overwhelmingly adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 106 and House Concurrent Resolution 290 declaring that Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, 'must remain an undivided city' and calling on Israel and the Palestinians to undertake negotiations to resolve their differences;

Whereas Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel later cited Senate Concurrent Resolution 106 as having 'helped our neighbors reach the negotiating table' to produce the historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed in Washington, D.C. on September 13, 1993; and

Whereas the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-45), which became law on November 8, 1995, states as a matter of United States policy that Jerusalem should remain the undivided capital of Israel: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress--*

- (1) congratulates the residents of Jerusalem and the people of Israel on the 30th anniversary of the reunification of that historic city;
- (2) strongly believes that Jerusalem must remain an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected as they have been by Israel during the past 30 years;
- (3) calls upon the President and the Secretary of State to affirm publicly as a matter of United States policy that Jerusalem must remain the undivided capital of the State of Israel; and
- (4) urges United States officials to refrain from any actions that contradict this policy.

Passed the House of Representatives June 10, 1997.

Attest:

Clerk.

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Source: [American Israel Public Affairs Committee](#)

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# House Resolution Expressing Support for Jerusalem as Israel's Capital

(April 24, 1990)

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Whereas the State of Israel has declared Jerusalem to be its capital;

Whereas from 1948 to 1967 Jerusalem was a divided city and Israeli citizens of all faiths were not permitted access to holy sites in the area controlled by Jordan;

Whereas since 1967 Jerusalem has been a united city administered by Israel and persons of all religious faiths have been guaranteed full access to holy sites within the city;

Whereas the President and the Secretary of State have demonstrated their strong desire to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and have worked diligently toward that end;

Whereas ambiguous statements by the Government of the United States concerning the right of Jews to live in all parts of Jerusalem raise concerns in Israel that Jerusalem might one day be redivided and access to religious sites in Jerusalem denied to Israeli citizens; and the search for a lasting peace in the region: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress

- (1) acknowledges that Jerusalem is and should remain the capital of the State of Israel;
- (2) strongly believes that Jerusalem must remain an

undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic religious group are protected; and  
(3) calls upon all parties involved in the search for peace to maintain their strong efforts to bring about negotiations between Israel and Palestinian representatives.

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Source: [American Israel Public Affairs Committee](#)

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### The Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act

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- [Bush Uses Waiver to Avoid Moving U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem](#)
- [Clinton Again Uses Waiver to Avoid Moving U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem](#)
- [Clinton Uses Waiver to Avoid Moving U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem](#)
- [Clinton Uses Waiver A Third Time to Avoid Moving U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem](#)
- [Deadline to Move U.S. Embassy Lapses](#)
- [The Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act](#)

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# Retention of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv

**November 3, 1954**

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*Statement issued by the Department of State:*

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The ranking diplomatic representatives of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria, and Egypt called on the Secretary of State on November 3 to make known the views of their Governments with respect to the plans for presentation of credentials in Jerusalem by the appointed American Ambassador to Israel, Edward B. Lawson.

In the course of the conversation the Secretary recalled the policy of the U. S. Government to look to the United Nations as primarily responsible for determining the future status of Jerusalem. Following normal practice, the presentation of credentials would be effected by Ambassador Lawson at the place where the Chief of State actually is. The fact that this means that the presentation will take place in Jerusalem implies no change in our attitude regarding Jerusalem nor does it imply any change in the location of the American Embassy in Israel, which is at Tel Aviv.

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# U.S. Opposes Israeli Foreign Ministry Move to Jerusalem

**July 28, 1953**

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*Statement by the Secretary of State:*

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The United States regrets that the Israeli Government has seen fit to move its Foreign Office from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

We have made known our feelings on that subject to the Government of Israel on two prior occasions. It was done in July 1952 and again in March 1953, when our Ambassador, hearing rumors that this was in contemplation, called upon the Israeli Government and requested them not to transfer their Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem.

We feel that way because we believe that it would embarrass the United Nations, which has a primary responsibility for determining the future status of Jerusalem. You may recall that the presently standing U.N. resolution about Jerusalem contemplates that it should be to a large extent at least an international city. Also, we feel that this particular action by the Government of Israel at this particular time is inopportune in relation to the tensions which exist in the Near East, tensions which are rather extreme, and that this will add to rather than to relax any of these tensions.

The views that I express here are, we know, shared by a considerable number of other governments who have concern with the development of an atmosphere of peace and good will in that part of the world.

We have notified the Government of Israel that we do not intend to move our own Embassy to Jerusalem.

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## The Jewish Virtual History Tour

### Ghana

by Mara Weiss



The first traces of [Judaism](#) in Ghana appeared in 1976, thanks to a Ghanaian man named Aaron Ahomtre Toakyirafa. Living in the community of Sefwi Sui in Western Ghana, Toakyirafa had a vision and

"spoke with spirits" driving him to believe that he and his fellow Ghanaian's were indeed descendants of the [Lost Tribes](#) of [Israel](#). He saw a clear connection and many similarities between his peoples practices and those of Judaism. For example, it was a tradition in Sewfi for Saturday to be a day of rest. Such a strong tradition that Sewfi that didn't adhere to it were frequently punished. Sewfi also followed the [Jewish dietary law](#) restricting the consumption of pork. Members of the male community were [circumcised](#) in youth. Toakyriafa was first viewed as crazy but over time his vision became more and more readily accepted.

Toakyirafa's certainty about his ancestry only grew as he traveled to the Ivory Coast. He studied the history of the population of Sewfi. The Sewfi had traveled south to Ghana but had come through what is now the Ivory Coast. He was convinced that the Jewish community of the Ivory Coast had migrated there from other documented Jewish communities.

### **The House of Israel Community, Sefwi Wiawso**



After his trip to the Ivory Coast, Toakyriafa began educating the Sefwi Sui and Adiembra communities about their Jewish herititage. He taught them Jewish [practices and traditions](#), integrating [Judaism](#) into their lives and preaching the study of [Judaism](#) to others. They called themselves the House of Israel.

The House of Israel was not accepted in Adiembra, a community neighboring Sefwi Sui. Christians violently abused and imprisoned House of Israel leaders. Most of Adiembra member of the House of Israel moved away.

Aaron Ahomtre Toakyirafa died in 1991. Many



**David Ahenkorah** thought that the Sewfi community and all of the Judaism that had been taught would just fade away. This almost happened, but in 1993, Toakyirafa was replaced by David Ahenkorah as the leader of the community. Ahenkorah experienced a life-altering vision very similar to that of Toakyirafa. The community then relocated to the small town of Sefwi Wiawso, known as New Adiembra.



There is currently a [synagogue](#) and family living facilities in New Adiembra. Most members of the community are the first generation of Ghanaians to be Jewish. There is a core group of approximately 800 people practicing [Judaism](#).

David Ahenkorah remains the spiritual leader of the House of Israel Community. During nightly group meetings, David and "Rabbi" Alex read from donated books about [Judaism](#), teaching community members of all ages about Jewish traditions. On Shabbat Alex reads from a English language Tanach, a gift from Western donors, as David interprets the week's parsha line by line.

On March 26, 2004, Bar Dahan was the first Ghanaian to become a [Bar Mitzvah](#).

## Contact

The House of Israel Community  
P.O. Box 57  
Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana W/R

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Sources: [The Jews of Africa](#); [Kulanu](#)

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## Mozambique

**by Samuel Levy**

The Jewish community of Mozambique is more than 100 years old. Throughout its existence, it has been small in number and diverse in origin. Before the turn of the century, the [Ashkenazim](#) and [Sephardim](#) who first migrated to the Indian Ocean port of Maputo (known before independence in 1975 as Lourenco Marques), hailed from such places as [Vilna](#), Marrakech, London, and Durban. For years, they met for services in homes and reportedly often feuded on liturgical matters. Community lore records a [Rosh HaShanah](#) early in the century at which an innovative hazan managed to please the whole congregation by alternating between [Ashkenazic](#) and [Sephardic](#) style pronunciation and melodies for the length of the service.



Despite their differences, in 1926 the two groups built a common [synagogue](#). But the community was never large enough to support a rabbi, so service and other rituals were led by members.

Despite an influx of Jewish refugees from [Nazi-occupied](#) Europe during the Second World War, the community seemed to be in a terminal demographic decline. By the early 1970's the gabbai had to roust visiting South African Jews from the city's tourist hotels to make a [minyan](#) on Friday nights. At Mozambican independence in 1975, most of the remaining Jews, who were out of sympathy with the collectivist economic

policies of the new government, left the country. The [synagogue](#), along with many churches and mosques, was confiscated; it was turned into a warehouse. The cemetery, once an urban oasis with its avenue of frangipani and a towering mango tree, fell into disrepair and was badly vandalized. Without the synagogue, and in a climate of official hostility to religion, organized Jewish life in Mozambique came to a halt.

In 1989, however, a local non-Jewish businessman, Alkis Macropolous, organized a campaign to have the synagogue returned to the community. An advertisement placed in the local newspaper brought the few remaining Jews in the country back together. Gradually, small contributions allowed clean-up and restoration work to begin. Alkis had expected the synagogue to become a sort of historical monument to the Mozambican Jewish community that had once worshipped there.

His expectations were justified. For Mozambique's few remaining Jews, isolation from world Jewry had meant no exposure to Jewish culture and no availability of the ritual requirements of Jewish life. The flame of Jewishness in Mozambique was all but extinguished.

Despite these circumstances, the return of the synagogue to the Jews led the Jews to return to synagogue. A handful of self-taught members started meeting in its single bare room on Saturday afternoons to sing fold songs and study Hebrew. Representatives of other religious groups in Mozambique attended an [Anne Frank](#) memorial program. When I stepped inside the little white sanctuary for the first time, I heard a group of twelve people singing "Am Yisrael Hai," accompanied on a portable keyboard by the gabbai-by-default, who happened to be a German Lutheran. It was, as they say, from the heart.

Since the 1989 recovery of the synagogue, milestone has followed milestone. The community's [sifrei Torah](#), which were presumed lost when most of the Jews scattered in 1975-76, were found in the safekeeping of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Because they were no longer kosher, the Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Dr. Cyril Harris, solicited the donation of another Torah scroll, and a congregation in Cape Town made that extraordinary gift to the Maputo community. The day the rabbi delivered the Torah happened to be Rosh Hodesh and hence an opportunity for a public reading from the scroll.

It was the first time the community's younger members had ever heard the Torah read. They listened with rapt incomprehension. Since 1989,

successive [Passovers](#) have incorporated as many local elements as possible. Mozambique's may be the only Jewish community in the world where the haroset on the seder plate is based on cashews, which are plentiful locally, and the maror is the herb nkakunda, which all agree is the bitterest edible thing sold in the market. On [Rosh HaShanah](#) in 1993, the shofar was blown in Maputo for the first time in at least 15 years. In November of that year, Mozambique and Israel established diplomatic relations.

The community's single most unifying ritual is the [Shabbat](#) service held every Friday night. Long gone is the competition between [Ashkenazic](#) and [Sephardic](#) liturgical styles. The task today is to make the services accessible and meaningful to those who speak only Portuguese (the first language of the community) and to those who prefer English (the common language of visiting foreigners). The result is an idiosyncratic mixture of the two, plus lots of singing in Hebrew, the language with which everyone struggles equally.

Jewish religious knowledge can lapse and culture evaporate, but Jewish identity lingers. And so, from even a single spark, Jewish life can revive. Among the Mozambican Jews, basic Jewish ideas and observances such as [circumcision](#) and [kashrut](#) are complete novelties. One man's only observance is to wear a [yarmulke](#) on [Yom Kippur](#) in an annual public affirmation of his identity. Another young man was brought to [synagogue](#) for the first time by an uncle at the age of 19. Ever since, he has attended Friday night services faithfully and even spent his precious saving on a Christian bible because it was written in Hebrew. Some months later, he wanted to admit himself to the hospital in order to be circumcised, having read on the reverse of a Jewish calendar about the mitzvah of [circumcision](#). The circumcision was put off pending some study of the meaning of the ritual and consultation with rabbinic authorities.

The return to long-buried Jewish roots is not limited to the Mozambicans. Some of the most active community members are non-Mozambican Jews who work on the staffs at embassies and foreign aid organizations. Many of them were not synagogue-going Jews in their own countries but became [Shabbat](#) regulars in Maputo and began to share with their less-educated Mozambican co-religionist.

The demand for Jewish knowledge in Maputo is greater than the supply. Books about Judaism, especially in Portuguese, are particularly prized.



But, what the community lacks in religious instruction it makes up for in enthusiasm. One of the projects that has made great headway is the restoration of the cemetery. The community has met on Sunday mornings since 1992 to remove tons of trash from the cemetery grounds, plant new trees and raise the walls to discourage vandals. The cemetery is well on its way to becoming the little urban garden it once was, and is again a fit resting place for previous generations.

The revival of the Jewish community of Mozambique, remarkably, has been helped along to a great extent by non-Jews. When you ask the key participants why they got involved, the common threads in their replies seem to be personal friendships with Jews and esteem for the principles of Judaism. In my year and a half in Mozambique, I found only curiosity and warm feeling about Jews and Judaism among non-Jews. The government ministries and the leadership of other religions have greeted the revival of the community with delight and encouragement. Despite its small size, the Jewish community has participated as a full equal in national ecumenical events involving Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Hindus.

After a generation of civil war, socialism and recurring drought, an observer of Mozambique might be excused for answering G-d's question to Ezekiel in the negative. But peace is giving Mozambique new hope of reconstruction and development. One small aspect of the more general improvement of national fortunes is the unexpected revival of the country's Jewish community. That miraculous development augurs well for the nation's future.

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Source: Jews of Mozambique. [Saudades](#)

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## The Virtual Jewish History Tour

### Namibia

by Mara Weiss



During the middle of the 19th century the De Pass brothers, Jewish merchants from Cape Town, established a trading post on the Nawaqualand Coast, becoming the first Jews in this southwest African area. In 1861, they started the Pomona Copper Company.

In the late 19th century, when Namibia became a German colony, Jewish

connections with the land grew much stronger. Carl Fuerstenberg, a German Jewish banker and head of the Berliner Handellgesellschaft, was responsible for the development of the diamond industry. He also organized the construction of a railway line from Luderitz Bay to Kubub. Emil Rathenau created the German South West African Mining Syndicate and established a research company in 1907 for the study of irrigation problems. Walter Rathenau was one of the two experts sent by Kaiser Wilhelm II to report on administrative reforms.

The number of Jews in South West Africa under German rule was no more than about 100, most of them in Swakopmund.

After [South Africa](#) was granted a mandate over Namibia by the League of Nations after World War I, however, the Jewish population increased and, in 1965, there were 400-500 Jews in a total white population of 68,000, most living in Windhoek. Windhoek has a Hebrew congregation dating from 1917, a synagogue built in 1925, a Talmud Torah, a communal hall, an active [Zionist movement](#) supported by generous contributions, and the only Jewish minister in the territory.

The only other community is at Keetmanshoop and consists of about 12 families.

Political developments including the cancellation of the League of Nations mandate by the United Nations and the proclamation of the establishment of an independent republic, now Namibia, has brought about a considerable dwindling of the Jewish population. Today's population consists of approximately 60 Jews.

## **Relations with Israel**

[Israel](#) and Namibia established diplomatic relations in 1994. Israel is represented by its ambassador in Zimbabwe.

In November 1980, Wwindhoek became a twin city with Kiryat Telshe Stone, a settlement outside [Jerusalem](#).

## **Synagogues**

Windhoek Hebrew Congregation  
PO Box 140, Windhoek

Tel. 2761 221990, Fax. 2761 226444

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Source: [\*Encyclopedia Judaica\*](#)

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- [America's Role in the Rescue of Ethiopian Jewry](#)
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