

Denomination and geographical location of Jerusalem

❖ Denomination

The city of Jerusalem has cultural and religious features that distinguish it from the rest of the world's cities. It has great religious significance among the adherents of the three Abrahamic religions, which made it a permanent focus of conflict and dispute. Due to its special importance, Jerusalem has survived, throughout history, twenty-four attempted destructions.

Historically, Jerusalem has been called by various names that are often associated with different historical eras. In ancient times, it was called "Jebus," a name related to the first Jebusites who built Jerusalem. In the ancient Egyptians' records, the name "Yabithi" was mentioned. Additionally, the texts of the Old Testament refer to various other names given to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was also named "Iliya," for Aelia, son of Aram, son of Shem, son of Noah, peace be upon him. This name was reused in the time of the Roman emperor Hadrian, who changed the name of the city to "Aelia Capitolina." The first part of this name, "Aelia", is the surname of Hadrian's family, while "Capitoline Jupiter" is the name of the supreme Roman god.

The name "Iliya" prevailed for about two hundred years, until Emperor Constantine (d.237 AD), who embraced Christianity and made it the official religion of the empire, returned the city to its Canaanite name: "Urusalam" or "Urushallim" (the city of peace). This was the first fixed name of the city, which was also used in Pharonic times.. Furthermore, the name "Urushallim" appeared in the cuneiform writings as (Uru-Sa-Lim), which corresponds to the name mentioned in the Assyrian writings since the eighth century BC (Ur-Sa-li-Amo).

The Old Testament shows that the oldest Hebrew name given to the city is "Shalim," then it was shortened to (Salim) or (Urshallim). Later, the name evolved and became pronounced (Yurushalaim). The same name appears on Jewish currency in ancient Jewish literature.

Among the names by which the city of Jerusalem was known during Jewish rule are "The City of David" and "Zion." Then they quoted the Canaanite name and distorted it until it became "Jerusalem" which means (the Holy House).

In the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, Jerusalem was mentioned as “Eiroslim,” while in the works of Josephus it was called “Heruslim.” In the Second and Third Book of Maccabees, the city was known as “Herocelloma.” The same name is mentioned in the writings of Strabo, Cicero, Pliny, Thacitus, and others.

By the early Roman invasion, the city was called “Heroslema,” then “Hero Salema.” When it was besieged by Titus (70 AD), its name was “Solimus.” In the era of Emperor Hadrian Caesar Traianus Augustus (117-138 AD), the name given to the city became “Aelia the Great,” or “Aelia Capitolina.”

It is also called “The City of Justice” and “The City of David”.

Jerusalem was known by the Roman name “Aelia” until the Muslim conquest. In “Mujam Al-Buldan” (the Dictionary of Countries), Yaqut said that “Eliaa” and “Elia” are names for Jerusalem, which mean the House of God.

Among its multiple names are “Beit El (the House of God), the village, the blessed land, the watchful one (as-sāhira), and the olive,” among many other innumerable names.

The name “Jerusalem” was mentioned, for the first time in French writings that date back to the twelfth century.

The most common Arabic name for Jerusalem is “Bayt Al-Maqdis” or “Al-Quds,” while in Christian writings, its name is “Urshallim,” based on the Hebrew name. The prevailing opinion is that the name “Urshallim” means “The City of Peace” or “The City of the God Salem.”

❖ **The Names are given to Jerusalem throughout history:**

1. Jebus Fort: Relative to the Jebusites.
2. Jebus: Relative to the Jebusites.
3. Yerushalim: Shalem, the Canaanite god, meaning peace.
4. Ursalm: A Canaanite name that means peace.
5. Salem: A Canaanite name that means peace.
6. Shalem: A Canaanite name that means peace.
7. The City of David: Named for the Prophet David.
8. The City of God.
9. Shalem: Mentioned in the Bible in the time of Christ.

10. Yarushalim: Mentioned in the ancient Canaanite writings.
11. Jerusalem: Foreign name, derived from the Canaanite name (Yarushalm).
12. Yabity: A name used by the pharaohs, and a modified form of the Canaanite name. This is how Jerusalem was referred to in hieroglyphs and in the ancient Egyptian language at the time.
13. Aelia Capitolina: The first name given to the city by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 135 AD under Roman colonization.
14. Bayt al-Maqdis ("Holy House").
15. Al-Quds Al-Sharif ("Al-Quds the Noble").

There are many names by which Jerusalem was known before the current era, such as: Even, The City of Rivers, The City of Valleys, Jostak, Normstek, The Light of Peace, The Light of Dusk, Yara, Keleh, Iriana, Gybesti, Ofel, Milo, Akre and Antokhia.

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics/ Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook 2017 / June 2017.

❖ **The geographical location of Jerusalem**

- **Location:** Jerusalem is located at 35 degrees and 13 minutes east (longitude), and 31 degrees and 51 minutes north (latitude).
- **Geographical location:** The city is situated on a plateau in the Judean Mountains that run north to south through the Palestinian territories. The mountain chain separates the Jordan Valley in the east from the Mediterranean Sea in the west. This location made it easy for the city to be connected with other cities. It is linked to main roads that penetrate the highlands from the extreme north to the extreme south. There are crossroads that cut through these main roads as well, linking the Jordan Valley with the Palestinian coast.

Jerusalem is situated on the Green Line which separates the 1967 West Bank from Israel, in a wide valley between the mountains that surround it. It is 54 km (33 miles) east of the Mediterranean, 23 km (14 miles) west of the northern end of the Dead Sea and 250 km (150 miles) north of the Red Sea.

The city's altitude above sea level varies between 2,350 and 258 feet.

- **The importance of Jerusalem's location:** The city's geographical location and centrality to Palestine and the world makes it a transit point for many trade routes. It combines two advantages. Being closed gives natural protection to the city. At the same time, being open

allows the city to communicate with the neighboring regions and countries. Consequently, the occupation of Jerusalem was the key to the occupation of the rest of Palestine and the surrounding areas.

The city's location also represents a spiritual center for the three Abrahamic religions. All this confirms the religious, military, commercial and political significance of the city as well.