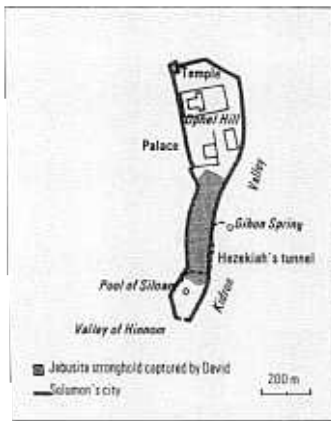


## Jerusalem

Jerusalem has been the stage on which some of history's most dramatic events have taken place. It is still a focus of interest in the world today. It has probably been besieged, destroyed and rebuilt more often than any other famous city. A succession of conquerors – including Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans – all saw the capture of Jerusalem as crucial to their overall strategy of empire-building in the Near East. It was the scene for much of the activity described in the Bible, and is a 'holy city' for three faiths – Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

There may have been a settlement on the site of present-day Jerusalem as long ago as around 2900 BC. The city is first mentioned in written records (inscriptions on Egyptian bowls) about 1,000 years later in the nineteenth century BC, as a city of the Canaanites. The site was probably chosen because its hilltop location and constant water supply from the Gihon Spring meant

### Jerusalem at the time of the kings



Above: the walls of Jerusalem from the time of the Jebusites, King Hezekiah (about 715 BC) and Suleiman the Magnificent (AD 1536), with some modern retaining walls.

that it could be easily fortified and defended. However, there are no special physical or economic advantages which explain why Jerusalem should ever have become more than an anonymous village in the Judean hills

When the Israelites entered Canaan in the middle of the thirteenth century BC, Jerusalem (then called Jebus) was occupied by a local tribe, the Jebusites. They were not ousted for some 250 years, until King David unified the settled tribes of Israel. He conquered the strategic site of Jerusalem and made it his capital city.

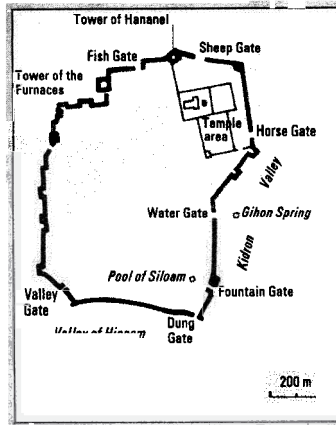
David set about making Jerusalem the political, military and religious centre of the country. His son Solomon carried this further

with an extensive building programme in the capital. The building of the temple (on the highest spot of the hilltop site) took seven years of Solomon's reign.

When the kingdom was divided in about 930 BC, Jerusalem was capital only of the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin. Later kings strengthened the city's fortifications and withstood attacks from would-be invaders. King Hezekiah (715–687 BC), under threat of an Assyrian siege, sealed off the Gihon Spring from the outside to deny the enemy a water supply and ensure his own. He then had a 600-yard/550-metre tunnel dug to carry water inside the city walls to the Pool of Siloam, which acted as a reservoir.

In 587 BC, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians who destroyed and burnt the city and tore down the walls. Jewish survivors were exiled to Babylon. Their dream of returning to Jerusalem was fulfilled in 539 BC when the Persians conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews to go back. They rebuilt a more modest version of Solomon's

### Jerusalem at the time of Nehemiah



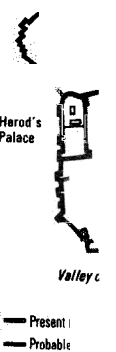
grand temple remained. Nehemiah, in the middle of the 5th century BC.

Jerusalem was ruled by the Persians from 537–332 BC. About this time, the city's name was changed to Yehud. It was claimed by Greece, and later by the Persians again.

With Alexander the Great's control of the region, Jerusalem came under the control of the Ptolemies. It was a self-governing city in the 2nd century BC, but was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

But in 170 AD, Epiphanius became the throne of the Roman Empire. The Greek gods were replaced by pagan statues. The temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

Jerusalem at



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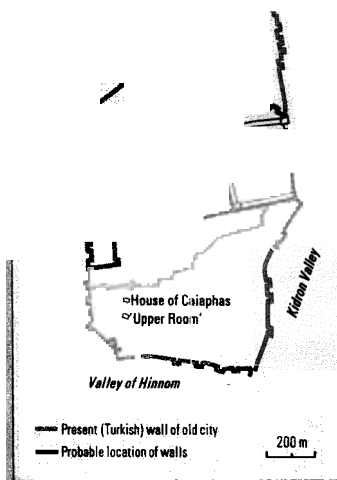


grand temple. The city walls remained in ruins until Nehemiah restored them in the middle of the fifth century BC.

Jerusalem, with Judea, was ruled by the Persians from 537-332 BC, but little is known about this period. When the city's name reappeared in history, Alexander the Great was claiming an empire for Greece, and Jerusalem automatically became part of his realm when he succeeded the Persian (Achaemenid) kings.

With Alexander's death, Jerusalem came under the control of the Egyptian king Ptolemy and the Jews enjoyed considerable freedom for self-government. The third century BC was a relatively stable period and Jerusalem developed and prospered.

But in 175 BC Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, succeeded to the throne of Syria and tried to advance the worship of Greek gods. He set up a pagan statue in the Jerusalem temple. Failure to observe the pagan customs was punished



taken, and were either sold as slaves or forced to fight as gladiators. Exile was once again the normal condition for most Jews; but Jerusalem, though destroyed, remained their spiritual home and object of their devotion.

The war of freedom led by Simon Bar Kochba in AD 132-5 briefly made Jerusalem the Jewish capital once again, but in 135 the Emperor Hadrian totally destroyed it, then rebuilt it and called it Aelia Capitolina. And once again the city passed from hand to hand. The Persians captured it in AD 614, the Moslems in 638, the Crusaders in 1099, the Turks in 1517. The British entered it during the First World War, and after the Second World War, in 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. Jerusalem was declared the capital in the following year.

Religious sites of Moslems and Christians have been maintained and fresh archaeological work, notably on the ancient city walls, has been undertaken. But apart from the old city itself, Jerusalem today is typical of many modern cities, with busy streets, stores and offices.



Right: a typical street in the old city of Jerusalem.