

JOPPA & TEL AVIV

Joppa. The city of Joppa, known today as Jaffa, is located in the Plain of Sharon about thirty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast. In ancient times, it served as the main seaport for Jerusalem. In modern times, the city has been eclipsed by neighboring Tel Aviv, which is the most important commercial and cultural center in Israel.

The earliest records of Joppa go back to a topographical list of Thutmose III in the fifteenth century B.C. It was one of the many cities that this Egyptian pharaoh had defeated (*ANET*, 242). A legendary account, which resembles the Trojan horse story, tells about the Egyptian conquest of Joppa. Troops were smuggled into the city in baskets, which were thought to contain gifts; after emerging from the baskets, the Egyptians overtook the city (*ANET*, 22-23).



Ruins from an Egyptian Fortress (13th Century B.C.)

The Old Testament reports that the city of Joppa was included in the allotment for the tribe of Dan (Josh. 19:46). However, the Danites did not conquer the Canaanites living in their territory (Judg. 1:34). Some members of the tribe even migrated to the north of Israel in order to settle there. They overtook the unsuspecting city of Leshem (or Laish), resettled it, and renamed it Dan (Josh. 19:47; Judg. 18:1-31).

During the period of the United Kingdom, David apparently took control of Joppa (see 2 Sam. 8:1). His son Solomon utilized the site as a seaport for Jerusalem. When building the temple, Solomon arranged for King Hiram of Tyre to ship him cedars from Lebanon. The timber was cut, and the logs were floated down the Mediterranean coastline to Joppa. From the port city, they were carried over land to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 2:16).

After the kingdom divided, the Assyrians dominated the ancient Near East. When God called Jonah (8th century B.C.) to preach to those living in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, the prophet fled in the opposite direction. Instead of heading east to Nineveh, he boarded a ship at the port of Joppa and headed west to Tarshish (Jon. 1:3). God used a storm and a great fish to change Jonah's direction.



Modern Whale Sculpture Commemorating the Jonah Account

Later, the Assyrians conquered Joppa during the conquests of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The king attacked the city before moving inland to besiege King Hezekiah in Jerusalem (*ANET*, 287).

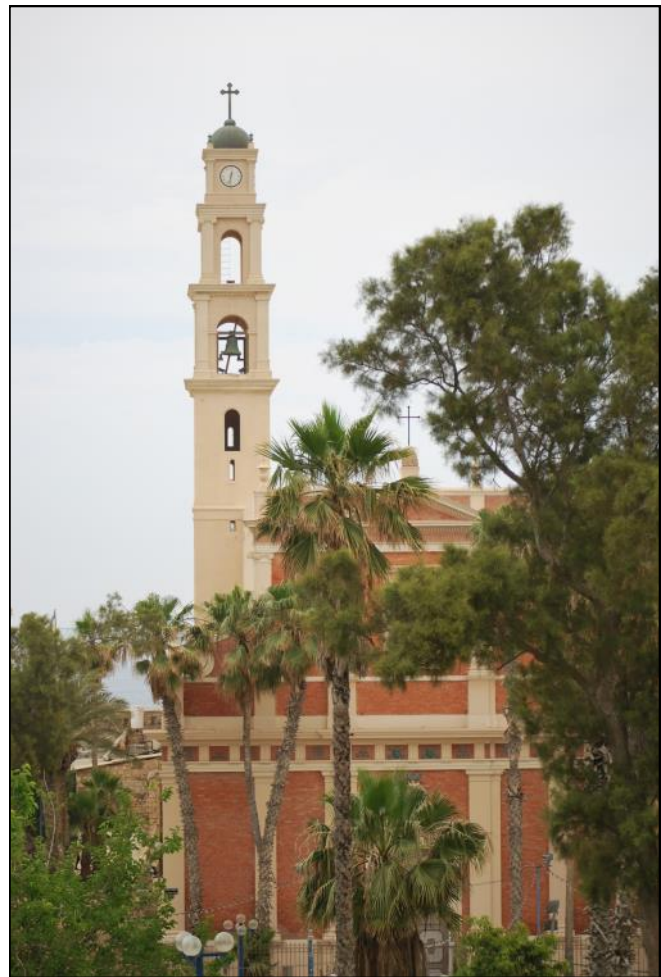
Joppa is mentioned once again in the Old Testament in the Post-exilic period. After Cyrus had taken Babylon and begun the Medo-Persian Empire (539 B.C.), he sent the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. They followed a similar procedure as Solomon, having cedars shipped down the coast from Lebanon to Joppa and transported overland to the holy city (Ezra 3:7). The use of the port, however, does not suggest that the city was under Israelite control.

During the Intertestamental period, Alexander the Great took Joppa as his army marched from Tyre down to Gaza (332 B.C.). After his death in 323 B.C., the Greek Empire was divided among his generals, the *Diadochoi*. After the Battle of Ipsus (301 B.C.), the city was controlled by the Ptolemies in Egypt. Following the Battle of Paneion, however, it fell under the power of the Seleucids (197 B.C.). When, in 168 B.C., Antiochus IV Epiphanes was attempting to Hellenize the Jews, he landed at Joppa on the way to plunder the Jerusalem

temple. At the port, two hundred Jews were tricked into boarding boats in the harbor, and then they were drowned. For this atrocity, Judas Maccabeus took revenge, burning some of the boats and harbor installations and killing people who had sought refuge there (2 Maccabees 12:3-9). Later, his brothers (Jonathan and Simon) took possession of the city (1 Maccabees 10:74-76; 12:34).

After the Romans gained control of Judea under Pompey (63 B.C.), the control of Joppa shifted from (1) the province of Syria to (2) the Jews to (3) Cleopatra (as a gift from Antony), and finally to (4) Herod the Great (Josephus *Antiquities* 15.7.3). Joppa lost much of its importance as a port when Herod built Caesarea Maritima.

In the first century A.D., after the Lord's church spread throughout Judea and Samaria, believers were found in the city of Joppa. It was in this city that Peter raised Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead. News of this event fueled the growth of the church there. Peter stayed for a time in Joppa with Simon the Tanner, whose house was by the sea (Acts 9:36-43; 10:5-6). This is where he had the vision of the sheet with various kinds of animals, indicating that Gentiles were fit to receive the gospel. The Roman centurion Cornelius sent messengers from Caesarea Maritima about thirty miles south (at least a day's journey) to find Peter in Joppa; they were instructed to bring Peter back so that he might preach the good news to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). The Church of St. Peter in Joppa designates the traditional site of where Peter received the vision.

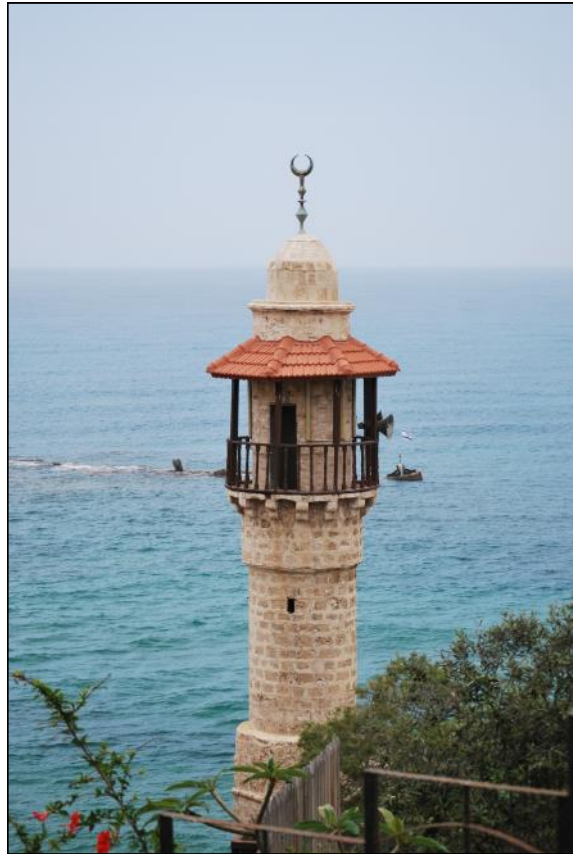


The Church of St. Peter

During the Jewish revolt against Rome (A.D. 66-70), Joppa was used by the Jews as a base for sea operations. However, the city was ultimately captured by the Roman general Vespasian (Josephus *Wars* 3.9.2).

Today, Jaffa is a diverse city of about 100,000 people. While the majority of these resi-

dents are Jews, some are Arabs. Among these are both Muslims and Christians. Artifacts from excavations in the city are displayed at the Jaffa Archaeological Museum.



Minaret of the Al-Bahr Mosque



Lintel of The Statue of Faith Portraying the Battle of Jericho

Tel Aviv. The city of Tel Aviv was established in 1909 by the Jewish community of Jaffa. The name reflects the past (Tel refers to an ancient “mound”) while looking to the future (Aviv means “spring”). This was the Hebrew title of Theodor Herzl’s book *Altneuland* (“Old New Land”), derived from Ezekiel 3:15.

Many Jews settled in Tel Aviv after fleeing from Nazi Germany. According to 2022 statistics, Tel Aviv ranks second in Israel’s population (behind Jerusalem) with 438,818 people. Over 90% of the city’s population is Jewish. (Tel Aviv’s metropolitan area, known as Gush Dan, accounts for over 40% of Israel’s population.) Tel Aviv serves as the country’s financial capital and business center; it is home to the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. The city has numerous cafes and a vibrant nightlife, being known as “The City That Never Sleeps.” Some refer to it as Israel’s “Sin City.”

Many artifacts relating to the biblical period can be seen at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv. Also of interest is Tel Qasile, a Philistine site that has been excavated. Temples have been discovered from different periods, one being built on top of another. An ostrakon was also found that reads “Ophir gold to Beth Horon, 30 shekels.” The gold of Ophir was well known for its fine quality (1 Kings 9:28).



Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean Coast