

# NABLUS

By Heba Hrimat

Nablus is a city located in the northern West Bank, about 49 km to the north of Jerusalem, and lies between the mountains of Gerzem and Ebal.

The name of this city, which is nearly 2000 years old, dates back to the Roman emperor Vespasian, who named it 'flavia neapolis' which translates 'the emperor's new city'. From then on, the city's name kept changing until its current name 'Nablus' was established. Nablus is mentioned in the Bible under its Hebrew name 'Shechem', however Shechem was moved 2 km from the initial location of the city after its annihilation during the first Roman-Jewish war.

Many historical periods have passed on Nablus, each has left its own imprint on the city, and some of the very notable sacred historical sites in it are Joseph's Tomb and Jacob's Well, where a Church was built under the same name.

The number of residents in Nablus are 146, 493, the vast majority of whom are Muslims, and about 500 Samaritans, and 650 Christians centered in Rafidia region in the western part of the city. The Christians in that district are divided into four denominations, the largest of which are, the Orthodox (300 people), then Latin Catholic and the Anglican community (with approximately 150 people each) and a minority of Roman Catholics (approximately 48 people).

The city has four Orthodox Churches, the oldest being Jacob's Well Church which is located in Tel Balata with its construction dating back to the fourth century, then comes the Church of St. Moses the Abyssinian in Rafidia (currently under

restoration), and the Church of St. Demetrius in the old city of Nablus, while the most recent is the Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, also located in Rafidia.

The Churches of other denominations are listed as follows: St. Justin's Latin Church, St. John the Baptist Church for the Roman Catholics, Churches of the Good Shepherd and St. Philip's for the Anglican community.

There is also an Orthodox Association, which dates back to the 1960s. It is managed by a committee of seven people, who are responsible for the preservation of the Church and community property, the funding of university fees for students in need and currently working on a residential complex establishment project.

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