

Jerusalem: A Holy City

Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, is considered a holy city by three major religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. For centuries, Jerusalem has been a spiritual center. The three religions can be seen in the cultural landmarks (human made buildings that represent an idea or specific place) of Jerusalem and in the symbols used around the world to represent these religions.

All three religions describe Abraham as an important figure in their early history. Muslims (followers of Islam) call Abraham, Ibrahim. Abraham and his family were nomads. They lived in tents and traveled from place to place in order to provide good grazing for their sheep. Abraham and his people are believed to have traveled in what is now the country of Israel, as well as areas that are now part of Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq.

All three religions describe Abraham as the father of two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Jews consider Isaac to be their ancestor, and Arabs consider Ishmael to be their ancestor. Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the son of God, lived in this area also. Knowing that the three religions share a common history and geography, it is not surprising that Jerusalem is considered holy by all three religions.

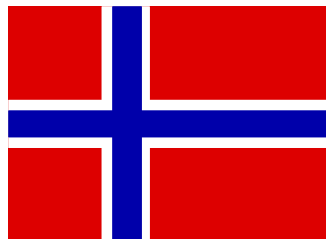
About 60% of today's population of Jerusalem are Jews (followers of Judaism). Jerusalem has been of religious and political importance to Judaism since Biblical times. To honor God, the Jews built over the ages a series of Temples in Jerusalem, which became the focus of Jewish religious practices and beliefs. The Jewish holy book called the Tanakh describes how important Jerusalem is for Jews. Today, a very important cultural landmark in Jerusalem is the Western Wall (formerly called the Wailing Wall) which is a symbol of the ancient Temples. Today, Jews say prayers at this stone wall, and often prayers are written on small pieces of paper and left in cracks in the wall. Other important Jewish religious sites in Jerusalem are King David's Tomb, the Jewish Cemetery, and Tombs of the Prophets. A cultural symbol used to recognize Judaism is a six-pointed star like the one on Israel's flag.



Jerusalem is Islam's third holiest city, after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that Muhammad visited heaven from a site in Jerusalem. Muhammad was an Arab prophet who preserved the word of God (called Allah) in a sacred book called the Quran. At this spot in Jerusalem, a golden domed shrine called the Dome of the Rock was built. This cultural landmark covers the stone from where Muhammad ascended to heaven. Today, Muslims visit the Dome of the Rock for religious purposes. Another Islamic religious site in Jerusalem is an ancient mosque (a building where Muslims pray) called Al Aqsa. The population of Jerusalem is about 35% followers of Islam. The green and white flag of Pakistan shows a cultural symbol for Muslims. It is a crescent moon and a star.



Christians (followers of Christianity) also consider Jerusalem a holy city. Many sites mentioned in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (the holy book of the Christians) are located in Jerusalem. Jesus taught his followers and performed miracles in this city. The Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrows) was the path Jesus walked while carrying a cross to Calvary. Calvary is the site where Jesus's body was nailed to the cross, and where he died, and was resurrected (ascended to heaven). In this location, a cultural landmark was created called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Therefore, this spot is very special to Christians. Christians also use a symbol to identify their religion. This symbol is a cross as shown on Norway's flag.



The presence of three religions has also led to violence. Each religion has at times sought to be in control of the area.

Directions: Read the article "Jerusalem: A Holy City," then answer the following questions. Questions 1-5 should be answered in **COMPLETE SENTENCES**.

1. Which religions consider Jerusalem a holy city?
2. Which religion has as a cultural landmark, the Dome of the Rock?
3. Which religion uses a cross as a symbol?
4. Why is the Western Wall of such special significance to the Jews?
5. Why would a country put a cross, a six-pointed star, or a crescent moon and a star on its flag?

_____ 6. Which of the following is an important cultural landmark for the Christians?

- A. Mecca and Medina
- B. the Tombs of the Prophets
- C. the ancient mosque of Al Aqsa
- D. the Via Dolorosa

_____ 7. What is the author's purpose in writing this selection?

- A. to inform people about Jerusalem
- B. to persuade people to be Christians
- C. to explain about Judaism
- D. to create a travel guide to Jerusalem

_____ 8. What is the main idea of this selection?

- A. Jerusalem is the third holiest city, after Mecca and Medina.
- B. Cultural landmarks are human-made buildings that represent an idea or characterize a specific place.
- C. Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, is considered a holy city by three major religions.
- D. Many sites mentioned in the Old and New Testament of the *Bible* are located in Jerusalem.

_____ 9. Which of the following statements is the best conclusion for this selection?

- A. The cross, the Star of David, and the crescent moon and star are ancient symbols.
- B. The presence of three religions has led to violence in Jerusalem.
- C. The Dome of the Rock, the Western Wall, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher can still be seen today.
- D. Most of the tourists who visit Jerusalem are Christians.

Answer KEY

1. Which religions consider Jerusalem a holy city?

Jerusalem is considered a holy city by the religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

2. Which religion has as a cultural landmark, the Dome of the Rock?

The religion of Islam considers the Dome of the Rock its cultural landmark.

3. Which religion uses a cross as a symbol?

The religion of Christianity uses the cross as its symbol.

4. Why is the Western Wall of such special significance to the Jews?

The Western Wall is of special significance to the Jews because the Jews built a series of temples to mark the spot where Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son.

5. Why would a country put a cross, a six-pointed star, or a crescent moon and a star on its flag?

A country might use one of these symbols on its flag to represent the religion of most of its citizens. A country might use one of these symbols because it is proud to represent one of these religions. A country might use one of these symbols because it might provide protection to its people.

 D 6. Which of the following is an important cultural landmark for the Christians?

 A 7. What is the author's purpose in writing this selection?

 C 8. What is the main idea for this selection?

 B 9. Which of the following statements is the best conclusion for this selection?