

Gates of Gaza #2

Jewish Gaza

Gaza Timeline

1468 BCE Pharaoh Thutmose conquers Ghazzat
14th century BCE Azzati mentioned in the El Amarna letters
12th century BCE Gaza becomes one of the five Philistine cities
332 BCE Alexander the Great besieges Gaza and conquers it
145 BCE Jonathan the Maccabee conquers Gaza
94 BCE Alexander Yannai adds Gaza to his Hasmonean kingdom
61 BCE Romans **expel** Jews from Gaza, beginning of the "Gaza calendar"
3rd-4th century CE Jews return
4th century Roman emperor Constantine founds Gaza Mayumas by the port
508 Jews dedicate the mosaic in the "King David" synagogue
634 Muslim conquest of Gaza
10th century Jewish and Karaite communities in Gaza
12th century Crusaders conquer Gaza, **expel** Jews
13th-15th centuries Under Mameluke rule, Jewish community in Gaza grows to be one of the most prominent in the Land of Israel, synagogue in the highest part of town, many Spanish Jews join community
Late 16th-early 17th centuries Najara family serve as chief rabbis of Gaza
1665 Nathan of Gaza proclaims Shabbatai Tzvi the Messiah
1799 Napoleon conquers Gaza as part of his Egyptian campaign
1835 Ibrahim Pasha **expels** the Jews
1885 Zeev Wissotsky leads campaign to resettle Jews in Gaza
1917 British conquer Gaza
1929 Riots all over Eretz Yisrael, Jews **evacuated** from the city

Samson and the Gates of Gaza

But Samson lay in bed only till midnight. At midnight he got up, grasped the doors of the town gate together with the two gateposts, and pulled them out along with the bar. He placed them on his shoulders and carried them off to the top of the hill that is near Hebron. (Shoftim 16:3)

Then Samson called to GOD, "O Sovereign GOD ! Please remember me, and give me strength just this once, O God, to take revenge of the Philistines, if only for one of my two eyes."

He embraced the two middle pillars that the temple rested upon, one with his right arm and one with his left, and leaned against them;
Samson cried, "Let me die with the Philistines!" and he pulled with all his might. The temple came crashing down on the lords and on all the people in it. Those who were slain by him as he died outnumbered those who had been slain by him when he lived. (Shoftim 16:21, 28-30)

Orpheus and King David

We Menachem and Yeshua sons of Yishai the late are lumber merchants, as a sign of admiration for the holiest site, have donated this mosaic in the month of Laos in the year 569.

Visitors

Sixty Jewish homeowners and they have a small, beautiful synagogue and vineyards and fields and houses and have already started making new wine. And I was greatly honored, especially by R. Moshe son of R. Yehuda Sephardi, and he stutters a little, and R. Meir Sephardi is a goldsmith ... and the Jews dwell on the heights of the land, may the Lord be praised. And there are few houses on the heights of the land, at the top of the Judaica. Meshullam of Volterra 1481

On the Shabbat all the elders and the Torah scholars came to dine with us, bringing cakes and grapes as their custom, and we drank seven or eight cups before eating, and were happy. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura 1488

Rabbi Yisrael Najara (1555 – 1625)

Aramaic Original ^[10]	Translation
<p>אנתה מלכא מלך מלכיא // אנתה רבון עלם ועלמיא // אנתה רבון עלם ועלמיא // אנתה רבון עלם ועלמיא // אנתה רבון עלם ועלמיא</p> <p>עובדי גיברתך ותמביא // שפר קדמי להסניא</p>	<p>Yah, lord for ever and ever // O King, you are king of kings.</p> <p>Your mighty deeds and wonders // are pleasant for me to relate.</p>
<p>שבחין אסדר צפרא ורמשא // לך אלה קדישא ברא כל נפשא</p> <p>עירין קדישין ובני נשא // חיות ברא ועוף שמיא</p>	<p>I will order praises to you day and night // To you, holy God, Creator of all life --</p> <p>The holy angels and the humans // The beasts of the field and the fowl of the heavens.</p>
<p>רבבין עובדך ותקיפין^[e] // מכיר רמיא זקיף כפיפין</p> <p>לו ייחי גבר שנין אלפין // לא יעול גיברתך בחושבנא</p>	<p>Many are your deeds and powerful // Humbling the lofty, straightening the bent.</p> <p>Were a man to live a thousand years // He could not envision your might.</p>
<p>אלהא דילה יקר ורבותא // פרוק ית ענך מפיוס ארונתא</p> <p>ואפיק עמך מגו גלותא // עמא די בסרת מכל אומיא</p>	<p>O God who has greatness and glory // Rescue your flock from the mouth of the lion!</p> <p>And free your people from exile // The people whom you selected above all the nations.</p>
<p>למקדשך תוב ולקדש קודשין // אטר די ביה ייחדו רוחין ונפשין</p> <p>זמרו לך שירין ורחשין // בירושלם קרתא דשופרא</p>	<p>Return to your sanctum, and your Holy of Holies // The place where spirits and souls rejoice.</p> <p>They will sing you songs and hymns // In Jerusalem, the city of beauties.</p>

Nathan Ashkenazi AKA Nathan of Gaza (1643 -1680)

When I had attained the age of 20, I began to study the Zohar and the Lurianic writings. [According to the Talmud] whoever wants to purify himself receives the aid of Heaven; and thus He sent me some of His holy angels and blessed spirits, who revealed many mysteries of the Torah to me. That same year, energized by the visions of the angels and the blessed souls, I was engaged in a prolonged fast during the week before the feast of Purim. I locked myself in a room in holiness and purity, and as I tearfully recited the penitential prayers of the morning service, the spirit came over me. My hair stood on end, and my knees shook. And I beheld the merkava [divine chariot], and I saw visions of God all day

long and all night. I was vouchsafed true prophecy like any other prophet, as the voice spoke to me, beginning with the words "Thus speaks the Lord." With utmost clarity my heart perceived toward whom my prophecy was directed... and only then did the angel permit me to proclaim what I had seen. I recognized that he was [the] true [Messiah].... And indeed the angel that revealed himself to me in my waking vision was a genuine one, and he revealed awesome mysteries to me.