

= Jifna =

Jifna (Arabic : جفنا , Jifnâ) is a Palestinian village in the Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate in the central West Bank , Palestine , located 8 kilometers (5 @. @ 0 mi) north of Ramallah and 23 kilometers (14 mi) north of Jerusalem . A village of about 1 @, @ 400 people , Jifna has retained a Christian majority since the 6th century CE . Its total land area consists of 6 @, @ 015 dunams , of which 420 are designated as built @-@ up areas , most of the remainder being covered with olive , fig and apricot groves . Jifna is governed by a village council , led (2008) by chairman Jabi Na'im Kamil .

Jifna was known as Gophnah (In Hebrew גופנה) at the time of the First Jewish @-@ Roman War , and after its conquest became a Roman regional capital . Later the town grew less significant politically , but nevertheless prospered under Byzantine and Arab rule due to its location on a trade route . St. George 's Church in Jifna was built in the 6th century CE , but fell into disrepair and was not rebuilt until the arrival of the Crusaders in the late 10th century . However , it again fell into ruin after the Crusaders were driven out by the Ayyubids . In modern times , the ruins of St. George 's Church have become a tourist attraction . During the period of Ottoman control in Palestine the tower of an ancient Roman structure in Jifna became the location of a jail house .

Jifna has local traditions and legends relating to the Holy Family , and to the village water @-@ spring . It is also locally known for its apricot harvest festival ; each year , during the late Spring period , hundreds travel to the village to harvest the fruit during its brief season .

= = History = =

= = Biblical era and Roman / Byzantine rule = =

It was suggested by Edward Robinson that Jifna was Ophni of Benjamin , mentioned in the Book of Joshua as one of the " twelve cities . " Nothing thereafter is recorded in its history until the time of the Roman conquest during the 1st century BCE , when it appears in various records as " Gophna " . Gophna was described by Flavius Josephus as the second city of Judea , after Jerusalem , in his account of the First Jewish @-@ Roman Wars during the 1st century CE . The town is depicted as Gophna in the Map of Madaba , situated north of Gibeon (al @-@ Jib) , and is also mentioned in the Talmud as Ben Gufnin , a " city of priests " . The latter portion of its Talmudic name derives from the Hebrew root word gefen , meaning " vine " .

Known by the Romans as Cofna , Jifna was a regional capital in the Iudaea Province under the Roman Empire . Around 50 BCE the Roman general Cassius sold the population into slavery , for failure to pay taxes . They were freed , however , by Mark Antony shortly after he came to power . Jifna was within the area under Hananiah 's command in 66 CE , during the First Jewish @-@ Roman War , and was the headquarters of one of the twelve toparchies (minor realms) of Judea . The Roman emperor Vespasian occupied the town in 68 CE , established an army garrison there , and concentrated within the city Jewish priests and other local notables who had surrendered to him . Titus , the future Roman emperor , passed through Gophna during his march to besiege Jerusalem in 70 CE .

The building of a church dedicated to Saint George during the 6th century CE indicates that by this time Jifna , now under Byzantine rule , had become a Christian town . Besides the church , other remains from this era are located in Jifna , including a Jewish tomb , a tower (Burj Jifna) once used by the Ottomans as a prison , a Roman villa , an olive oil press and a winery .

= = Middle Ages = =

Jifna , along with most of Palestine , was annexed by the Rashidun Caliphate under Umar ibn al @-@ Khattab after the Battle of Ajnadayn in 634 . The town became less politically significant under the Arab dynasties of the Umayyads , Abbasids and Fatimids , but remained a major regional center

for trade and commerce , due to its location along the Jerusalem ? Nazareth road . It was known by the Arabs as Gafeniyyah .

Sources are vague , but it is likely that St. George 's Church fell into disrepair during the early decades of Islamic rule , and that unfavorable circumstances for the Christian population prevented them from rebuilding it . However , it was partially rebuilt with old materials by the Crusaders , who conquered the area in 1099 . The Crusaders built a large courtyard building in Jifna . It had a monumental gate with a portcullis , with a large vaulted hall and thick walls of fine masonry . After their defeat to the Ayyubids under Saladin in 1187 , the church again fell into ruin . A document dated 1182 with the signature of one Raymundus de Jafenia , might indicate a Christian presence at this time . According to the American biblical scholar Edward Robinson , there are remains of massive walls in the center of the village , now filled by houses . They were relics of a castle built by the Crusaders . However , the masonry has no characteristics of the Crusader period ; rather , the remains display the Arab architectural style of the post @-@ Crusader period , most likely of the 18th century , judging by the dressing of the stones .

= = = Ottoman era = = =

After the Crusaders were succeeded by the Ayyubids and then the Mamluks , the Ottoman Empire conquered Palestine in 1517 , and Jifna came under their control for the following 400 years . In 1596 it appeared in the tax registers under the name of " Jifna an @-@ Nasara " , being in the nahiya (subdistrict) of Jerusalem of the Jerusalem Sanjak , with a population of 21 households . The villagers paid a fixed tax @-@ rate of 33 @.@ 3 % on agricultural products , including wheat , barley , olive trees , vineyards , fruit trees , goats and beehives , in addition to occasional revenues ; a total of 6 @,@ 470 akçe . It was under the administration of the Bani Zeid subdistrict , part of the larger Jerusalem District , throughout Ottoman rule , being the only all @-@ Christian village in the district . During this period , the main commodity of Jifna was olive oil . Ottoman activity in the village was minimal , but they used the remains of Jifna 's castle , known as " Burj Jifna " , as a jail house sometime during the 19th century . In the early 1830s , Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt conquered most of the Levant , including Palestine . In 1834 there was a revolt against the Egyptian authorities in the Jifna area ; 26 residents of Jifna were subsequently exiled to Egypt for their alleged participation in the uprising . They were joined , voluntarily , by two prominent local priests .

An Eastern Orthodox Church was built in the village in 1858 , and a larger Latin (Roman Catholic) church dedicated to St. Joseph was built in 1859 , adjacent to the ruins of St. George 's Church . In the courtyard of St. George 's Church is a sarcophagus . St. George 's Church has continued to serve as a place of worship into the modern era and has been the site of archaeological excavation since the mid @-@ 19th century . Mass is still held at its altar on certain occasions . In 1882 the Palestine Exploration Fund 's Survey of Western Palestine described Jifna as an Important Christian village , with a Latin Church and a convent . Also in the 1880s , Jifna was frequently taxed by Ottoman authorities . It also came into consistent armed conflict with another Christian village , Bir Zeit , which in one incident , resulted in the deaths of five men from that village . In retaliation , residents of Bir Zeit uprooted and burned 125 of Jifna 's olive groves .

= = = Modern times = = =

In 1917 , during World War I , the Ottomans were defeated by British and Arab forces . After a brief period of military rule , Jifna and its region came under the control of the League of Nations British Mandate , in 1922 . In 1947 the United Nations proposed the partitioning of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states , with Jifna being a part of the projected Arab state . However , after the 1948 Arab @-@ Israeli War the whole West Bank region , including Jifna , was annexed by Transjordan to form the Kingdom of Jordan , and the Arab state was stillborn . In 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank , after their victory in the Six @-@ Day War .

After the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel , Jifna was placed in " Area B " . Thus , its administrative and

civil affairs were transferred to the PNA , while security matters remained in Israeli control . Throughout the ongoing Second Intifada , which began in 2000 , Jifna has not experienced violence to the same extent as other parts of the West Bank , such as in nearby Ramallah , but its residents face travel restrictions and economic hardship .

On 31 July 2015 a 15 @-@ year @-@ old resident was shot dead by an IDF sniper after allegedly throwing a firebomb at an army outpost .

= = Geography and climate = =

Jifna is located on the slope of a hill , standing at an elevation of about 661 meters (2 @,@ 169 ft) above sea level . It is situated at the intersection of two ancient trade routes , the mountainous north @-@ south route and the east @-@ west route connecting the Jordan Valley with the Mediterranean seacoast . In 1945 its land area consisted of 5 @,@ 939 dunams , 52 dunams of which were classified as built @-@ up area in 1945 . Today Jifna has a total jurisdiction over 6 @,@ 015 dunams , 420 of which are designated as built @-@ up and roughly 2 @,@ 000 planted with olive , apricot and other fruit trees .

The village is located 8 kilometers (5 @.@ 0 mi) northwest of Ramallah and al @-@ Bireh and about 23 kilometers (14 mi) north of Jerusalem . The Palestinian refugee camp of Jalazone was built on Jifna 's southern lands and is connected to the village by road . The villages of Dura al @-@ Qar ' and Ein Siniya are located adjacent to Jifna to the east and northeast respectively . Other nearby localities include Abu Qash to the southwest , Beitin to the southeast , Ein Yabrud to the east , ' Atara to the north and Bir Zeit to the northwest . Jifna is connected to the main Ramallah @-@ Nablus highway by a road at the eastern side of the village .

Jifna experiences a temperate Mediterranean climate . Based on data for nearby Ramallah , average monthly high temperatures range from 53 ° F (12 ° C) in January to 84 ° F (29 ° C) in July / August , the corresponding lows being 39 ° F (4 ° C) and 63 ° F (17 ° C) . Rain is usually restricted to the winter season , from around November until the end of April . The months that receive the most precipitation are January and December and the annual rainfall is 23 @.@ 2 inches (590 mm) .

= = Demographics = =

According to Edward Robinson , Jifna 's population in 1838 consisted of about 200 people , of whom only 42 were adult males . In a 1945 land and population survey carried out by Sami Hadawi , Jifna had 910 inhabitants . The modern inhabitants of Jifna belong mainly to eight families , four of whom are originally from the village , while the other five have , at various times , migrated from other countries such as Syria .

In 1994 , Jifna experienced a wave of emigration , with about half of its population leaving the town to pursue better livelihoods elsewhere . The first census carried by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) shows that Jifna had a population of 961 , of whom 623 (64 @.@ 8 %) were classified as refugees in 1997 . The gender distribution was 465 males (48 @.@ 4 %) and 494 females (51 @.@ 6 %) . The age distribution was : Under 15 , 330 (34 %) ; 15 ? 29 , 275 (29 %) ; 30 ? 65 , 304 (32 %) ; Over 65 , 50 (5 %) .

The population of Jifna continues to grow . According to the PCBS , Jifna 's mid @-@ year population estimate for 2006 was 1 @,@ 358 . An informal estimate from Autumn 2006 gives the population as 1 @,@ 500 , " 25 % of whom have had to move to Jerusalem or Ramallah to find jobs " . The 2007 census by the PCBS listed Jifna 's population as 1 @,@ 716 , of which 856 were males and 860 females .

= = Religion = =

The remains of the Byzantine @-@ era church in Jifna testifies to the existence of a Christian community prior to the Muslim conquest . It continued to exist during the Middle Ages and the village

is still inhabited mainly by Christians . The names of Christian inhabitants from Jifna appeared in a 10th @-@ century inscription on a stone above the gate of St. George 's Monastery in the Wadi Qelt .

Ottoman tax records from the late 16th century reveal that Jifna had a Christian population at the time also . An informal survey in 1927 found 550 inhabitants , of whom 325 were Catholics and the remainder reportedly " Christians of other denominations " . Palestinian Christians make up about 80 % of the residents , while the remaining 20 % are Muslims , mostly refugees .

It is certain that most of the Christian residents of Jifna in the 12th century were local inhabitants . Apart from local Christians there was also a Frankish settlement , as is attested by the ruins of a maison forte (manor) built in the lower part of the village . In Jifna , like in many other sites in Palestine , the Crusaders built their settlement in the heart of the local Christian settlement .

= = Economy = =

Although most of Jifna 's cultivable land is covered with olive groves as well as fig , walnut and apricot trees and grape vines , agriculture is no longer the village 's main source of income . Many of the village 's former farmers are living off other businesses , including restaurants , other small family @-@ owned industries , and simple commerce .

Unlike some other West Bank localities , unemployment is a minor issue in Jifna . However , the average income is low because of the unstable political situation in the Palestinian territories , Israeli checkpoints , the West Bank barrier and the 2006 freezing by Israel of funds to the Palestinian territories ? although the latter no longer applies to the West Bank .

According to the PCBS , 98 @.@ 5 % of Jifna 's 201 households are connected to electricity through a public network . The same percentage is connected to a sewage system , mostly through a cesspit . Pipe water is provided for 98 % of the households primarily through a public network (97 @.@ 5 %) , but some residents receive water through a private system (1 @.@ 5 %) . The village is home to the Jifna Women 's Charitable Society which offers health services and recreational activities for women and children .

= = = Small businesses = = =

There are three restaurants in Jifna : Al @-@ Burj Restaurant , Red Valley Restaurant and Garden , and Tabash Restaurant , as well as a hotel : al @-@ Murouj Pension . In 2003 , the Odeh family of Jifna opened a leisure complex ? called the Dream Day Resort ? in the village . The complex , containing a half @-@ Olympic @-@ size swimming pool , a children 's pool and a jacuzzi is frequented by residents in Jifna and the surrounding area .

Al @-@ Burj Restaurant ? also known as " Burj Jifna " ? specializes in Palestinian cuisine and contains a café and a Palestinian culture hall . Situated in the center of the village , the restaurant is the site of Jifna 's old city . With international funding , the local youth club restored the area , adding bright accents to the stone masonry . The restaurant has become a center of tourism and the complex provides tours for its rooms , olive oil presses and ancient ramparts . Tabash Restaurant was founded in 1962 by a Palestinian refugee family from Jaffa . Initially known as al @-@ Wadi Bar , it received its current name in 1972 . The owners and the employees of the restaurant are from the Tabash family .

= = Culture = =

= = = Traditions = = =

There are a number of local traditions in Jifna . A prominent legend among Jifna 's inhabitants is that the Holy Family rested near an oak tree in the town on their way from Jerusalem . The legend 's origins are due to Jifna 's location along the ancient Jerusalem @-@ Nazareth road .

A nearby mountain was named Jabal ad @-@ Dik (" Mount of the Rooster ") because of a traditional story . According to the tradition , a Jew that lived in Jifna had visited Jerusalem during the Passion . Seeing Jesus rise from the dead , the man immediately converted and told his wife what he saw . His wife refused to believe him unless the rooster she had just killed would come back to life . Instantly , the rooster flew away towards the mountain . The story was recited in some monasteries on Holy Thursday together with other biblical readings .

A legend exists about Jifna 's spring ? which the village has used for centuries ? concerning how it periodically runs low on water . Popular belief is that this is the work of the djinniye (female spirit) . According to Palestinian researcher Tawfiq Canaan , " In Jifna the priest has to go on such an occasions to the dry spring to repeat prayers and burn incense , and thus reconcile the djinniye or force her to let the water flow " .

Like many Palestinian villages , the women of Jifna have their own traditional dress . Costumes in the village , known as rumi abyad (" Greek White ") and rumi aswad (" Greek Black ") , were dresses of hand @-@ woven linen embroidered with the Jifna 's own motifs . Preparing burbara , a sweet pudding @-@ like dish made from whole grain wheat , on the Feast of Saint Barbara has been a tradition in Jifna for several centuries .

= = = Festivals = = =

In April ? May 2005 Jifna hosted the first annual International Artists ' Workshop in Palestine . The festival , known as the " Jifna Spring " was the first held in a rural village instead of a major city such as Hebron or Ramallah . During the festival , dozens of artists from all over the world collaborated on several projects , including stone sculptures , metalwork , photography , mural paintings and installation pieces . Many of the works were influenced by the " specificity and qualities " of Jifna , while others dealt with the subject of Palestinian identity .

Jifna , locally famous for its apricot harvest , hosts an annual two @-@ day apricot festival in the first week of May . Hundreds of West Bankers flock to participate in the harvest . The festival is also used by Palestinian politicians as an opportunity to give speeches praising Palestinian farmers and encouraging boycotts on Israeli products and reliance on domestic agriculture .

= = Government = =

Jifna is governed by a village council consisting of ten members including the chairman . The council was founded in 1954 , when a prominent resident , Nasri Ilias Samara , pressured the Jordanian authorities to recognize the institution , even though a village was normally required to have a population of at least 1 @, @ 000 inhabitants for permission to establish a village council . The decision was approved by Jordan 's then prime minister . Representatives from Jifna 's largest families formed the original council 's body , appointing Smara as chairman and Salim Issa Musleh as vice chairman . Jabi Na 'im Kamil was elected as the chairman in 2005 and the Badil (Alternative) list ? which represents a leftist alliance of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian People 's Party ? won most of the council seats .

= = Education = =

Jifna contains one gender @-@ mixed primary school and kindergarten , founded by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1856 and managed by Jifna 's Catholic church . The school 's staff comprises eight teachers and two nuns , as well as four teachers for the kindergarten . Students who have graduated from the school commute to Ramallah or Bir Zeit daily for their secondary and tertiary education . Most university students attend the nearby Bir Zeit University .