# 78 Safed

## Names (also known as)

Hebrew: צְפַת - Tzfat; Ashkenazi, Tzfas, Ṣ'fath

Arabic: صَفَد, Ṣafad

Alternate names include Zefat or Tsefat.

## Etymology

Ashkenaz – one of the sons of Japheth (Gen 10); the nation from him.

## Location/Description

A city in the far north of Israel. Located at an elevation of 900 metres, Safed is the highest city in the Galilee and in Israel. It can experience warm summers and cold, often snowy, winters.



Safed has been identified with Sepph, a fortified Jewish town in the writings of the historian, Josephus.

Some writers propose that Ashkenaz (אשכנז) arose from Ashkūz (אשכוז), i.e. the Scythians, by an old copyist error writing נ (nun) in place of ו (vav)

The city is located above the Syria-Africa fault-line. It is considered one of the cities in Israel most at risk of earthquakes though the last major earthquake to hit Safed was in 1837.

## Scriptural references

### Old Testament

**Genesis 10:2,3** – The sons of Japheth; Gomer, … And the sons of Gomer; **Ashkenaz**, and Riphath, and Togarmah.

**Jeremiah 51:27** - Set up a standard or signal in the land [to spread the news]! Blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare and dedicate the nations for war against [Babylon]; call against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and **Ashkenaz**. Appoint a marshal against her; cause the horses to come up like [a swarm of] locusts [when their wings are not yet released from their horny cases] (Amplified).

### New Testament
None

## Brief history

The area of Safed was originally assigned to the tribe of Naphtali.

Safed is one of the highest cities in Galilee. Legend has it that it was founded by a son of Noah after the great flood.

While in the vicinity of Safed Jesus had fittingly said; 'a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid' (Matt. 5:14).



It is referred to in the Talmud as one of five elevated places where fires were lit to announce holy days and festivals in Israel.

In 1102 AD the Crusaders built a castle at Safed. It was captured by Saladin in 1188.

After the expulsion of all Jews from Spain in 1492, many rabbis made their way to Safed. It became a centre for Jewish learning and a regional centre for trade during the 15th & 16th centuries. As a result, Safed is considered one of Judaism's four holy cities, along with Jerusalem, Hebron and Tiberius.

The European rabbis brought a lot of Western philosophical influences with them and Safed became a centre of Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical movement. They look for esoteric

and metaphysical principles in the Scriptures to explain the nature of the universe, existence and various ontological questions; they claim knowledge comes from meditation not necessarily by reading the Torah.



Crusader ruins in Safed

In 1974, 105 Israeli Jewish school children were on a school trip in Safed when they were taken hostage by three members of a Palestinian militant group who crossed over from Lebanon (only 10 kms to the north). In what became known as the Ma'alot massacre, 22 of these school children were among those killed by the militants during an attempted rescue.



Safed today

## Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safed

(Compiler – John Tierney)